THE INFLUENCE OF THE MISSISSIPPI RIVER ON MARK TWAIN AND HOW IT PERVADED HIS WRITING

A Thesis
Presented to
The Graduate Division
Drake University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts in English

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by
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January 1965

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Most readers of Mark Twain, from the small boy who laughs over the boyish adventures of Huckleberry Finn to the adult who reads, ponders over and reads again Huck's battle for physical and spiritual survival, know that the Mississippi River plays a pertinent part in the works of Twain, that the river flows through many of his books and becomes a part of their power. However, some readers may see the river as only a body of water which Mark Twain uses as a means for conveying his characters from one location to another. Some fail to see that the river had so influenced Twain's early life that through his writing it became one of the greatest symbols in American literature.

> To it [the river] is owing all that in his work which is large and fine and eloquent. The river is what makes The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn his most vivid story and Life on the Mississippi his most impressive autobiographic narrative.[1]

Because the river played such an important role in Twain's life, it reveals itself as a great force in his writing. He utilizes it as a structural device, as an image and as a symbol, areas in which a definite pattern evolves.

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[1]Charles Miner Thompson, Mark Twain: Selected Criticism, ed. Arthur L. Scott (Dallas: Southern Methodist University Press, 1955), p. 56.

This pattern reveals a growing pessimism which seemed to envelop Twain's thinking and writing after he became a successful author. The evidence of Twain's change of philosophy appears in his use of the river; therefore, this paper will pursue Twain's utilization of the river to determine the extent to which the river pervades his literature.

From the river came the characters and themes of frontier literature which Twain used so often. He knew well the sharp trader and the swindler. He witnessed the county justices' decisions which were arrived at by common sense, the bad boy's tricks (often he was not just a bystander), death, murder and burial.[1] A brief look at his biography will show this great river influence.

Samuel Clemens, later to be known as Mark Twain, was born in Florida, Missouri, in 1835. He was the son of a lawyer who worked hard and sometimes fruitlessly to provide for his family. When young Samuel was four years old, the family moved from Florida to Hannibal, Missouri, a change that would play an important part in the life of Clemens and the literature of America. Hannibal, Missouri, although a small, quiet town, was located on the banks of the Mississippi

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[1]Dorothy Waples, "The Middle West Finds a Voice: Mark Twain," The Culture of the Middle West (Appleton, Wisconsin: The Lawrence College Press, 1944), p. 44.

where hundreds of steamboats brought the world to its door. The time was right for a boy full of wonder. Steamboating was in its prime during the 1840's and '50's and Samuel Clemens was there to see it all. As a very young boy he received his first impression of the river which was playing an important part in the history of the country. By stretching north and south the Mississippi brought the people of the two areas together, enabling one to learn the language and the customs of the other. This mingling brought more hostility than understanding, since the conservative, slave-holding South could not understand the more liberal views of the North. The river also separated the East and West and those that crossed it learned a new kind of life on the other side. Gone were the well-established and settled lives of the eastern states as the traveler crossed the Mississippi to the rough, unsettled territory to the west. Hannibal was situated almost precisely in the middle of this, giving its inhabitants the opportunity of mingling with the traveler going up or down the river as well as the one crossing it. It was, indeed, "an idyll and a cosmos."[1] Thus, Clemens was able to observe the peculiar people of "foreign lands" as well as their impressions of each other.

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[1]Bernard De Voto, Mark Twain's America (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1951), p. 52.

Some of the transients stayed a few hours and some for years, but young Sam became friends with all of them. As any impressionable boy, Sam was at first wide-eyed at the world he saw. Eventually, however, he became part of this world and avidly observed and unconsciously absorbed it all.

Clemens eventually became restless and left Hannibal. He tried writing in various news offices in New York and Philadelphia. Finally, however, he became homesick for the Middle West and returned to do odd jobs of printing and writing for newspapers. He decided to take a trip to South America, but found it necessary to work along the way to pay the expenses. On his way down the Mississippi to New Orleans, he met the pilot of his steamboat, Mr. Bixby, whom he persuaded to teach him the intricate art of piloting. Thus, the young writer put away his paper for awhile and became a Mississippi River pilot, a position that taught him more than ever about the river.

After the railroads and finally the Civil War brought an end to the prosperity of the steamboats, Sam Clemens decided to try his luck and skill elsewhere. He left piloting and went with his brother to Nevada where he began his career as a writer. He adopted the name "Mark Twain," an old riverboat term, as a pseudonym. One career had ended and another one begun, but the influence of the former would live again in the works that followed.

His observations were tucked away for the future reference of the writer Mark Twain who used the experience that was America--the flush, the hard living, the romantic, the ugly and the fake, and, above all, "the myriad of human character."[1] He used the river until it became for him a symbol of thoughts men live by. "His name is inseparably connected with the river because he wrote a great book about it."[2] Miss Waples went on to say that Twain learned much from the river and the river passed this gift [Twain] on to his readers. Twain uses what it taught him until the river becomes a part of his language, making the Mississippi appear eloquent and at times transcendent when he writes about it.

In reading works which are not directly connected with the river, one is still impressed by the great influence of the Mississippi upon his writing. No matter what he is writing about, the river imagery creeps in, revealing itself to be a characteristic part of his language. Probably the most amusing of these river allusions are found in his love letters to Livy, his wife-to-be. The evidence of his familiarity with the steamboat suggests itself when he

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[1]Edgar Marquess Branch, The Literary Apprenticeship of Mark Twain (Urbana, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1950), p. 24.

[2]Waples, op. cit., p. 41.

tells her:

> Being adrift, now, and rudderless, my voyage promises ill; but while the friendly beacon of your sisterly love beams though never so faintly through the fogs and mists, I cannot be hopelessly wrecked.[1]

Through the acute imagery of the drifting, rudderless boat, one can see that, although the lost lover is tossing about aimlessly, her friendship has made life meaningful, enabling him to weather all "storms." Twain's use of the steamboat imagery for emotional appeal is pointed and impressive here. Of course, it is somewhat humorous, yet it is convincing to Livy since she knows that Twain has experienced times like this when the steamboat was lost in the fog.

The image of the voyage and the boat is Twain's method of persuading Livy's mother to consent to the marriage of the two. By telling her that he has "paddled his own canoe" for some time, he endeavors to convince her that he is "competent to so paddle it the rest of the voyage and take a passenger along, beside."[2] Of course, "paddling your own canoe" is a well-known saying, but, by stretching it to include the voyage and the passenger, Twain has cleverly created a unique image out of a hackneyed phrase. A mother-in-law hardly could resist such a witty, confident young

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[1]Dixon Wecter (ed.), The Love Letters of Mark Twain (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1949), p. 19.

[2]Ibid., p. 66.

man!

Most of Twain's images are unique. His ability to use something which he knows well to establish another meaning, remote from the original, is one element which makes his writing enjoyable. He is capable even of using the parts of a steamboat in this way. In another letter to Livy he says:

> Fairbanks called upstairs to know what part of the chicken I wanted--told him to give me the port side, for'rard of the wheel.[1]

This humorous application of the steamboat arrangements appeals to the reader's visual imagery as he can see by the pointed description the chicken's left thigh waiting to be eaten. This comparison of a chicken with a steamboat reveals how deeply embedded in his memory were his days as a steamboat pilot. Like one who has mastered a new language, he had learned to think in this new tongue--the language of the river.

Even the revered pilot's position has its place in Twain's love letters. When he tells Livy that he hoped her "faith remained at its post when the storm swept over" her heart,[2] one is able to visualize the stalwart pilot, at the wheel of his boat, guiding his charge through the perils of a storm. Not only a sensory experience is witnessed here

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[1] Ibid., p. 56.

[2] Ibid., p. 59.

but also an emotional one. Livy becomes entangled with the words of love and the empathy for the pilot as he watches over his beloved boat. The idea that the storm "swept" over her heart adds even more emotional appeal.

Twain's travel books are another indication of this compulsion to talk about the river. When he is in other countries, his thoughts are of America and to him the Mississippi represents America. His vivid observations of points of interest in these countries are brought to life by comparing them with scenes he remembers about the river. These comparisons vivify the scene before him. For instance, while he is going over the plains in Australia, he describes some small cabins and children as "rugged little simply-clad chaps that looked as if they had been imported from the banks of the Mississippi without breaking bulk."[1] Twain remembers the poor people who lived along the river. Many times they were pushed out of their homes because the river flooded everything around. Somehow they came back and started over again, never planning to make more than the bare essentials. "Without breaking bulk" is still another image of steamboating. In terms of shipping, bulk means cargo and "in bulk" is "in mass" or not shipped in separate

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[1]Mark Twain, Following the Equator (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1899), Vol. I, 153.

units. Here Twain creates the impression that the children were shipped in mass from the Mississippi shore, just as they had been before, not changed or separated from the others in any way. These "simply-clad" Australians suggest the same image. In Switzerland Twain is reminded again of the Mississippi. He observes that the Swiss take good care of their rivers; they wall up the banks so that they look like wharves along the Mississippi.[1] The assets of a foreign landmark are compared favorably with the Mississippi. In the instance above, the Swiss banks are taken care of; therefore, they merit this favorable comparison. One gets the idea that he remembers the Mississippi, especially during his foreign travels, as bearing only favorable qualities. When Twain compares the size of a lake in Italy with the river[2] and also compares the Nile with the Mississippi,[3] he always considers the Mississippi as good as or better than the other. Twain belittles the Australian reaction to a cold spell and, when he is comparing it with an American cold spell, he attempts to convince the Austra-

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[1]Mark Twain, A Tramp Abroad (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1906), Vol. II, 176.

[2]Mark Twain, The Innocents Abroad (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1911), Vol. I, 200.

[3]Mark Twain, The Innocents Abroad (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1911), Vol. II, 373.

lians that what they experience is not a real winter at all. He makes the comparison by describing the river, frozen over from bank to bank even as far south as Memphis, where it seldom gets very cold.[1] Again, the river outdoes its counterparts in other parts of the world.

Twain's language, even in times when he seems to be conversing, is affected by the river. Thoughts such as "time drifted smoothly"[2] and "he was not a man to set the river on fire"[3] seem to appear suddenly with little forethought. This seems to suggest that Twain thinks of the river often. The words "drifted smoothly" at first glance seem out of context with the word "time," yet the image one gets of time passing, with little activity, is a pleasing one. In the description of the man not setting the river on fire, Twain again has taken a common phrase and given it a fresh version. Instead of the term "setting the <u>world</u> on fire" he substitutes the <u>river</u> which was his world for a great part of his youth. These two examples illustrate the difference in the moods that the river can create. This suggests the variety of images Twain creates by using the

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[1]Mark Twain, <u>Following the Equator</u>, Vol. I, 114.

[2]Mark Twain, <u>Life on the Mississippi</u> (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1951), p. 185.

[3]Mark Twain, <u>The Innocents Abroad</u>, Vol. I, 12.

river, a creation which will be discussed in subsequent chapters.

Another startling revelation about the river is Twain's mention of it in various humorous sketches. In "The Facts Concerning the Recent Resignation" Twain supposedly goes to see the Secretary of the Navy and suggests that Admiral Farragut is not doing his work in Europe. He says that pleasure excursions (implying that Farragut's trip is one) should be less expensive. His remedy is, "Now they [Farragut's men] might go down the Mississippi on a raft."[1] It seems the river or something connected with it is his panacea for everything. Of course, this is a humorous observation, yet it must be noted that even in humor the Mississippi still offers the favorable choice.

Not only Twain but his characters as well make these startling allusions to the Mississippi. In A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court, Hank, the Yankee, sets off a bomb to save himself and the disguised king from the knights who think the two are beggars. As Hank tells it, "Yes, it was a neat thing, very neat and pretty to see. It resembled a steamboat explosion on the Mississippi."[2] The fact that

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[1]Charles Neider (ed.), The Complete Humorous Sketches and Tales of Mark Twain (Garden City, New York: Hanover House, 1961), p. 83.

[2]Mark Twain, A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's

this is blurted out by Hank who has never been as far west as the Mississippi indicates that Twain speaks out about the Mississippi even when it is obviously out of place. The image itself is a good one because in other of his works he so vividly describes these steamboat fires. Thus, the river was so much a part of his life and thought that it even became a distinct part of his language. Even after twenty-one years of being away from the river, Twain holds it in his memory and its imagery finds its way into his writing, whether it be fiction, travel, autobiography, or correspondence.

Although critics have discussed this great influence of the Mississippi River on Twain, no one has dealt with the river alone as a predominant force in the shaping of Mark Twain's writing. In many biographies the Mississippi has been discussed generally as one of the variety of factors which molded Twain's life and thus his writings. Biographies such as Albert Paine's Mark Twain: A Biography, Dixon Wecter's Sam Clemens of Hannibal and Minnie Brashear's Mark Twain: Son of Missouri make numerous references to Twain's connection with the river as a young boy in Hannibal and as a steamboat pilot, but none of these biographers discuss in detail the tremendous influence of the river and how it was

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Court (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1902), p. 262.

used as a predominant image and symbol.

In Mark Twain's America Bernard De Voto wrote a chapter called "Idyl: St. Petersburg" in which he discussed the river and how it brought the world to the young Sam Clemens. In various places throughout the book he emphasized the part that the Mississippi played in forming the western frontier. However, he did not specifically discuss the influence of the river in Twain's writing.

Gladys Bellamy in Mark Twain as a Literary Artist had a chapter entitled "Looking Backward" in which she mentioned the writing of Life on the Mississippi. She also discussed Twain's awareness of the beauty of nature through his experience on the Mississippi.

Albert E. Stone in The Innocent Eye devoted a chapter called "Huckleberry Finn and the Modes of Escape" to the discussion of the river from a structural as well as symbolic point of view. None of these critics, however, devoted a full discussion to the river as one of the most influential factors on Twain's work. Therefore, this paper will show the great extent to which Twain has utilized the Mississippi River in his works as a structural device, as an image and as a symbol.

In each one of these areas, a definite pattern evolves, a pattern which indicates the basic philosophy of Twain as a writer and as a man. This pattern is one of

change which came over Twain after he became a successful author. A growing pessimism began to take hold of him, a growth which continued until it enveloped his entire thinking and writing. The evidence of this change appears prominently in Twain's use of the river. As a youth, he was a river pilot, an experience he remembers as a good one when he writes about it in the first part of Life on the Mississippi. Then, however, he returns to the river after a long absence and now the river seems changed to him. From this time on, Twain's writing reveals this changed river and the growing pessimism.

By utilizing the river in three ways, Twain reveals this change. As a structural device it becomes a vehicle displaying the changes that have occurred in the river itself and in the society that lives on its banks. Twain's use of the river as an image shows this growing pessimism in a different way. The images of the steamboat, the river people and the river itself change from the fanciful and sentimentalized objects in the earlier writings to the realistic and concrete subjects in the later writings. As the images change, so does the language as it too becomes less flowery and more concrete. Then, as a symbol, the river displays this pessimistic attitude for it is peaceful and romantic in the earlier writings but becomes a complicated symbol of philosophical ideas such as external power

and environmental determinism in the later ones. This paper will discuss each of these uses of the river and show how it reveals the growing pessimism and final despair of Mark Twain.

First, it will be necessary to define the words "image" and "symbol" and then to see how these definitions apply to Twain's works. The word "image" according to Thrall and Hibbard is "a literal and concrete representation of a sensory experience or of an object that can be known by one or more of the senses."[1]

By studying the imagery of a work, one may center the attention on the physical world, presented through the work's language, upon the patterns and devices by which the images are achieved, upon the psychology which produced the work and gave it its special and often hidden meaning or upon the ways in which the pattern reinforces the meaning of statement, plot and other action.[2] In this study of Twain's imagery, through the concrete image of the steamboat, the river people and the river itself, a pattern of growing pessimism is revealed. Through the change in these objects and the general tone of the words he uses, one can see the

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[1]William Flint Thrall and Addison Hibbard, A Handbook to Literature (New York: The Odyssey Press, 1962), p. 232.

[2]Ibid., p. 234.

change in Twain's attitude toward humanity.

An image can create an obvious, concise meaning or it can be indefinite and general. Twain uses both kinds of images and in doing so reveals a change in his writing and philosophy from his earlier to later writing. For example, in the earlier part of Life on the Mississippi Twain describes himself on the river as "away out in the midst of a vague, dim sea that is shoreless, that fades out and loses itself in the murky distances."[1] Words such as "impenetrable gloom" and "exquisite misery of uncertainty" also are found in the passage. Many of these terms, "vague, dim sea" and "murky distances," for example, are indefinite and glossy terms. They can be interpreted in many different ways.

However, the latter portion of Life on the Mississippi reveals passages with more definite terms and much less flowery language. For example, the "wind bent the young trees down . . . creating swift waves of alternating green and white, according to the side of the leaf that was exposed."[2] The excess wordage is left out and the trees are only "young," and the swift waves are created by "alternating green and white." These are definite terms and produce

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[1]Mark Twain, Life on the Mississippi, p. 93.

[2]Ibid., p. 407.

definite images. The complexity of Twain's philosophical change which is revealed through the imagery will be discussed in detail in Chapter III.

According to Wellek and Warren in Theory of Literature, an image can be invoked now and then in a single piece of writing, but if it persistently recurs it becomes a symbol.[1] It will be necessary to define the word "symbol" because this will be a discussion of the symbolism as well as the imagery of the river. The symbol serves in the same capacity as the image in that it refers to something concrete in the objective world but it goes a step beyond in that it makes this referent suggest a meaning beyond itself. Thus, the symbol does not "stand for" the meaning, but calls on something which suggests the meaning.[2] In this way Poe's raven suggests death to the reader and becomes a symbol rather than just an image.

Harry Levin stated in Symbolism and Fiction that a symbol is a middle point between what is known and what is not known. He called it "a meeting point between the finite and the infinite."[3] Philip Wheelwright in The Burning

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[1]Rene Wellek and Austin Warren, Theory of Literature (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1949), p. 194.

[2]Thrall and Hibbard, op. cit., pp. 478-479.

[3]Harry Levin, Symbolism and Fiction (Charlottesville, Virginia: University of Virginia Press, 1956), p. 19.

Fountain explained it as carrying "a hidden or less obvious or more transcendent meaning in addition to the surface one."[1] There are, of course, various other definitions and discussions of the words "image" and "symbol" but those given here will be used in this thesis and apply best to Mark Twain.

The river is presented by Twain on three levels--as a structural device, as an image and as a symbol. On the one level the river is a means of transportation, exposing the characters to various experiences. On the second level, however, it becomes an image which changes as Twain's pessimism grows. Finally Twain uses the river to symbolize various elements to his characters and eventually to himself. This paper will show these three levels of the river. Chapter II discusses the Mississippi as a structural device. Chapter III discusses it as an image and Chapter IV discusses the river as a symbol. Both primary and secondary sources will be used. The predominant primary sources are Twain's Life on the Mississippi and The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, these being the two major works in which the river appears. However, references to other of Twain's works will be cited also, since the river appears in one

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[1]Philip Wheelwright, The Burning Fountain (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1954), p. 24.

connection or another in most of them. Secondary sources and observations will be used along with the primary sources so that various ideas and attitudes can be presented to further develop the intent of this paper.

CHAPTER II

STRUCTURAL USE OF THE RIVER

In A History of American Literature Since 1870, Pattee said of Twain:

> His books nowhere rise into the pure serene of literature unless touched at some point by this magic stream that flowed so marvelously through his boyhood. The two discoverers of the Mississippi were De Soto and Mark Twain.[1]

This is interesting in the light of the information touched upon in Chapter I, for the Mississippi River is the dividing line between the East and the West of the United States, and Mark Twain is the person who connected the two by writing about that which he knew best. Twain brought freshness to American literature. Since he not only wrote about the river but lived close to and on it for several years, it was a definite part of his life. Pattee even went so far as to say that Twain was the first man of letters born west of the Mississippi.[2] With this as an introduction, this chapter will be devoted to a discussion of the most basic level of Twain's three uses of the river in his writing, that of

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[1]Fred Lewis Pattee, A History of American Literature Since 1870 (New York: Century Company, 1915), p. 48, cited by E. Hudson Long, Mark Twain Handbook (New York: Hendricks House, Inc., 1957), p. 73.

[2]Ibid.

structure. Without structure an author would have no book; without the river Twain would not have written two of his greatest works. In these books Twain uses the river to provide a basic part of the framework. It is a force which binds together the thoughts and experiences of the major character; it is the geographical fact which makes it possible to follow Huck's journey on a map. The river is necessary at the narrative level for a symbolic interpretation of that journey.

In the Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, (hereafter referred to as Huckleberry Finn), the greatest of Twain's novels, the river is definitely an important aspect because it provides several opportunities for Huck which he would not ordinarily have. It makes possible Huck's seeing parts of the country which he has never seen before. He is familiar with the river at St. Petersburg, but this is as far as his knowledge goes. As he proceeds down the Mississippi, he comes in contact with areas he does not even know exist, areas which hold mysteries that intrigue him. By exposing him to these new surroundings, the river introduces Huck to many new experiences which are a necessity for the development of the maturation theme.

A function of the Mississippi in Huckleberry Finn is to unify and to join together these experiences. The various episodes which take place are accounted for by the river

journey. Huck's adventures are credible because Twain has established the structural framework of the river which flows through a cross section of this country, exposing various people and places. In a sense, almost anything can happen on this trip on the raft since the river is known to produce surprises caused by acts of nature and by acts of man. When Huck and Jim leave the island, headed for Cairo, Illinois, Twain emphasizes their goal of setting Jim, the slave, free. This intensity is built up by their watching the lights of the towns as they pass, hoping that each one will be those of Cairo. As the two go down the river, Huck describes the days and nights as they come and go. The river and narrative seem to flow simultaneously as the Mississippi furnishes continuity and movement of the plot.[1] Jim's apprehension and pessimism are intensified as the raft continues to float past towns, none of them Cairo. When they find they have gone past their destination without realizing it, Jim's danger increases, because he is now floating down the southern part of the Mississippi and can be taken as a slave at any moment. Expediency becomes the way of life, because they still must find a way of keeping Jim out of danger. This expediency leads to various devices

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[1]E. Hudson Long, Mark Twain Handbook (New York: Hendricks House, Inc., 1957), p. 319.

which Huck conceives. When necessary, he uses disguises. For example, when the two encounter some men looking for runaway slaves, Huck pretends to be a helpless boy, looking for aid for his family stricken with small pox. The men are happy to help him by giving him money to seek aid in the next village. The river makes Huck's success with the disguises feasible because it has taken him to a territory where he is not known, enabling him to be whomever he likes.

As is true of other picaresque novels, Huckleberry Finn is episodic in structure. The picaro witnesses the cold-blooded murder of an innocent man, the feud between two aristocratic families and the fraud of two characters who are seeking an inheritance from a dead man's family. To each one of these episodes, Huck is taken by the river. After each he goes back to the river and it, in turn, transports him to another adventure. It also puts an end to his adventures by bringing Aunt Polly to the farm of Uncle Silas. She identifies him and so end the episodes of Huck, Jim and the river.

Lest he develop characters of a single group, Twain also utilizes the river to move from one set of people to another. In doing so, he enables Huck to learn about these people, who they are and what kinds of lives they lead. Again the framework of the river makes these characters credible. Since the Mississippi presents a cross section of

the people, as well as the territory, Huck meets a variety of interesting people. He meets Colonel Sherburn, the town bigot who takes advantage of a crowd's ignorance and apathy to further his own cause by shooting Boggs, the town's vagrant. Huck learns to know the southern gentleman who is genteel and sophisticated until he is pressured with contrary opinions. Then he carries on a feud for generations. Colonel Grangerford "was well born, as the saying is, and that's worth as much in a man as it is in a horse."[1] Nevertheless, his "good breeding" ceases, as Huck observes, when the Grangerfords and Shepherdsons slaughter each other.

The river also introduces Huck to the Duke and Dauphin, two swindlers who are ready to take the money of anyone who is foolish enough to let them try. These characters, although ridiculous at times, are also made believable by this river journey. The Mississippi yields many of these confidence men who go up and down for the sole purpose of obtaining money regardless of the method. Although Huck is not bothered by them at first, eventually he sees them for what they are. The experiences he has with them reveal his fundamental integrity and his recognition of evil. As Huck expresses the problem: "I didn't want no trouble with their

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[1]Mark Twain, The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1961), p. 104.

kind. I'd seen all I wanted of them, and wanted to get entirely shut of them."[1]

The final situation in the book involves still other kinds of people. The river takes Huck to the farm of Tom Sawyer's relatives where he meets the kindly aunt and uncle who take him into their home. Here he finds people much like those he has left in St. Petersburg. So the river has, in a way, returned him to the world with which he is familiar. He is able to understand the ways of these people and is not baffled by the things they say and do. To some critics this return to the familiar does create somewhat of a problem, however. Structurally, Twain seems to use the river to create a linear framework for the novel. Huck goes down the river, following the current, meeting new experiences, but he is not able to come back home the same way. Because the river cannot take him upstream on a raft, one gets the impression that he can not go home again. As the river flows one way toward the sea, so must Huck go this way. However, Twain imposes a circularity on the book's structure when he has Huck return to those whom he knows. Huck even says "it was like being born again."[2] This circular movement seems to have little bearing on the rest of the novel. It almost seems that Twain has contrived it

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[1] Ibid., p. 218.

[2] Ibid., p. 224.

to give the book a humorous ending. Many critics have studied this ending and have arrived at a variety of controversial opinions. Lionel Trilling and T. S. Eliot wrote essays in which they defended Twain's use of the Tom-Huck ending. Although Trilling said that the only mistake he found in the book's form is its "too elaborate" conclusion, he said it has a certain "formal aptness," for it provides the device Huck needs for falling back "into the background which he prefers. . . . [Huck] could not well endure the attention and glamour which attend a hero at a book's end."[1] T. S. Eliot said that "it is right that the mood of the end of the book should bring us back to that of the beginning."[2]

Other critics, such as Leo Marx, disagreed with the ideas of these two. Marx, for example, said that the ending of Huckleberry Finn is too long and changes the entire meaning of the book. He contended that Huck and Jim both assume mature attitudes during their quest for freedom only to lose them in the last ten chapters. They are seeking freedom from a "tawdry" society and are able to escape each

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[1]Lionel Trilling, "The Greatness of Huckleberry Finn," The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, Sculley Bradley, Richmond Croom Beatty, and E. Hudson Long, editors (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, Inc., 1962), p. 318.

[2]T. S. Eliot, "An Introduction to Huckleberry Finn," The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, Sculley Bradley, Richmond Croom Beatty, and E. Hudson Long, editors (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, Inc., 1962), p. 326.

time they return to the raft. However, when they are on the Phelps farm, they give in to the society which they are trying to avoid and become a part of it.[1]

Both of these arguments seem feasible. Twain does seem to contrive the ending for a humorous effect, forgetting the maturity that both Huck and Jim have acquired. The ending is too long and becomes extremely farcical, bordering on low comedy. Possibly, if Twain had shortened this ending, the reader would find it more palatable, for its length tires the reader. Nevertheless, Twain actually does not bring the structure into a complete circle in the end because Huck, although returned to those he knows, is still not satisfied with that society. In other words Twain has Huck go back to his former society. Maybe the author feels that a young boy can make a mistake in thwarting his loved ones and going off to meet new adventures. The youth may decide that home is the best place after all. Thus, Twain makes this decision for Huck by bringing him back to the only family he has left. But then Huck says: "But I reckon I got to light out for the Territory ahead of the rest, because Aunt Sally she's going to adopt me and sivi-

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[1]Leo Marx, "Mr. Eliot, Mr. Trilling and Huckleberry Finn," The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, Sculley Bradley, Richmond Croom Beatty, and E. Hudson Long, editors (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, Inc., 1962), pp. 328-341.

lize me and I can't stand it. I been there before."[1] Thus, the structure continues on its linear pattern, as Huck will continue on his journey. The return to the familiar only seems to be a loop in a continuing line.

There are various other experiences which the river makes possible for Huck. It offers him a mode of escape from each encounter that he has. First of all, he is able to escape from his "pap" by leaving the cabin and crossing the river in a small boat. He and Jim escape Jim's hunters by leaving the island and floating down the river on the raft. After seeing the southern feud, he escapes from the sight of his dead friend, Buck, to the river where he hopes to forget what has happened on shore. Huck and Jim also use the river to escape from the Duke and Dauphin, but find they have been outwitted.

One of the most unusual of all Huck's experiences is the friendship between himself and Jim, a friendship built on unusual circumstances, for they are both trying to flee from someone. They are, in a way, partners in crime because each has left his home with someone in pursuit. Although Huck has been brought up to believe in slave-holding, his conscience, which distinguishes between right and wrong, does not permit him to treat Jim as a slave. Consequently,

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[1]Mark Twain, The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, p. 293.

he makes a great moral decision because Jim is his friend. Even though he taunts Jim at times, he remains a loyal friend throughout the book.

This friendship between the young white boy and the Negro slave brings to mind one of the fascinating elements of this book. One of the great themes in Huckleberry Finn is the contradiction between the society who believes in slavery and those who believe in the rights of a human being, regardless of color. This, of course, is a current problem and probably will be for centuries to come. With the presentation of this problem, however, Twain casts a different light on it by using the river which changes the picture entirely. As mentioned before, almost anything seems possible on the river and this relationship is no different. The two are able to respect each other as human beings because they are out in the middle of the river, divorced from the social forces on shore. Here they are able to establish their own moral code because their thoughts and feelings are neutral. Their relationship is more civilized on the raft than off. This civilization demands mutual responsibility, self-abnegation and moral choice. It is interesting, however, that this relationship is impermanent; it cannot survive on shore where social forces work against them.[1] Huck has pangs of guilt at

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[1]Dan Jacobson, "Mark Twain and the Calm Squatter,"

various times. Once he even writes a letter to Miss Watson to tell her he has the runaway slave. But then he pictures the trip down the river and the experiences the two have shared. He is completely free to think as he wants since no one is there to tell him otherwise. The moral struggle ends with Huck tearing up the letter and saying, "All right then, I'll go to hell."[1] Thus, the use of the river as the basic structure makes this theme possible.

The entire trip down the Mississippi suggests a literary pattern of the journey, an archetypal pattern for many great books in world literature. The hero embarks from the familiar place for an unknown land where he comes in contact with many of life's adventures. "Superstition, chicanery, gullibility, innocence, naivete and shrewdness are among its [the river's] distillates."[2] One by one Huck meets one or more of these, but is able to handle each in his own way. The river's introduction of these does not necessarily mean the river can help him cope with them. He must do this on his own. He is able to pass through narrow escapes and finally reaches the end of the journey by having

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Spectator, CCV (August, 1960), 219-220.

[1]Mark Twain, The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, p. 214.

[2]Kenneth R. Andrews, Nook Farm: Mark Twain's Hartford Circle (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1950), p. 211.

conquered the obstacles and being recognized by friends.

Chapter I discusses the fact that the river is so ingrained in Twain's mind that it becomes a part of his thoughts even when he is not discussing the river, evidence also revealed in his river books. Although Huck is familiar with the river and has lived close to it all his life, Twain makes him almost too familiar with the steamboats. Huck probably was at the dock to meet most of them when they arrived, yet there is no evidence in either Tom Sawyer or Huckleberry Finn that Huck is as familiar with steamboating as Twain implies. Obviously in many instances it is Twain talking, with his background of steamboats, rather than Huck. Nowhere does he say that Huck has been a pilot, yet he knows enough about the workings of a steamboat to make a reader skeptical. When Huck and Jim are separated in the fog, Huck knows what to do to find Jim again. He knows not to trust the location of sounds he hears since fog tends to make the sounds come from various places. Like a steamboat pilot Huck knows that:

> Up-stream boats didn't generly come close to us; they go out and follow the bars and hunt for easy water under the reefs; but nights like this they bull right up the channel against the whole river.[1]

In Life on the Mississippi when it is actually Twain speak-

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[1]Mark Twain, The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, p. 94.

ing he says:

> The easy water was close ashore and the current outside, and therefore we [the pilots] must hug the bank, up-stream, to get the benefit of the former, and stay well out, down-stream, to take advantage of the latter.[1]

Huck also remembers that he must light a lantern for a boat going downstream but not upstream unless they are in a crossing.[2] Again when Twain is speaking as himself he says:

> Coming up-stream, pilots did not mind low water or any kind of darkness; nothing stopped them but fog. But down-stream work was diferent; a boat was too nearly helpless, with a stiff current pushing behind her.[3]

When Jim and Huck find a wrecked boat south of St. Louis, Huck displays his knowledge of the steamboat when he says they are

> . . .sneaking down the slope of it to labbord . . . towards the texas . . . struck to forward end of the skylight . . . and the next step fetched us in front of the captain's door.[4]

Likewise Twain uses these various terms when describing his life as a steamboat pilot. Thus, it is evident that Twain can not help using the language of the river. It seems to creep into everything he writes whether he realizes it or

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[1]Mark Twain, Life on the Mississippi, p. 46.

[2]Mark Twain, The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, p. 64.

[3]Mark Twain, Life on the Mississippi, p. 58.

[4]Mark Twain, The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, p. 67.

not. He does not seem to be pushing this knowledge on his readers or using this as a vehicle for showing them his vast understanding of steamboating. Instead, it seems to come spontaneously and without effort as a part of the man himself.

Thus, by using the river, Twain is able to build an array of episodes and characters around the central figures. He uses this idea again, but in a different way, in another book about the river, Life on the Mississippi. This book, although not a novel, has been called by many critics a biography of a river. In reading it, one can find qualities of an actual biography. The discovery or birth, the life of the subject and its effect on others and the change which it undergoes are all included in this life story. The book is written in two parts. Eight years elapsed between the writing of the first and second parts. After being away from the Mississippi for about thirteen years, Twain wrote the first part about the river as he remembered it. Eight years later, after an absence of twenty-one years, he returned to the Mississippi for a steamboat excursion and wrote the second part, describing the river as it had changed.

A similar circumstance took place in the writing of Huckleberry Finn. Twain wrote to various acquaintances that he had started this novel, but had given it up because he

felt it worthless. However, when he returned to the river, he became inspired with the exciting and challenging life that the river had to offer, and perhaps with the renewed memories of his own river experiences. He then revised and finished his greatest novel, having been inspired by its central figure. Huckleberry Finn and the second section of Life on the Mississippi are similar in nature. After Twain returns to the river, he no longer views it with the nostalgia of a romantic. Instead, it becomes something more real, a part of life itself. By his description of the river's change in the latter half of Life on the Mississippi, one is able to see that both the man and the river have lost this sense of romance. Therefore, when Twain returned to the writing of Huckleberry Finn, this book, too, became more worthwhile to him. He was able to discuss the issues that Huck meets with more depth and perception, making the book a work of art. This idea will be substantiated in the discussion in Chapter IV.

The structure of the two parts of Life on the Mississippi is somewhat the same. The basic element is the river which establishes the framework for the action which takes place. The narrator is Twain, himself, who is taking this trip on the Mississippi. Although the river serves as the framework for the two sections, one cannot help noticing the difference between them.

In the first section, the river is the basis for a benign world which Twain knows. It is beautiful, benevolent and challenging to the young pilot. It introduces Twain, just as it does Huck, to various people and experiences which he would not ordinarily know.

First of all, it teaches him about various parts of itself. The young pilot must learn the many challenges the river offers. He learns about shallow water where the boat can become stalled, about whirlpools in which the boat can be torn to bits and about storms in which the boat can be lost or sunk. Expediency also becomes his way of life as he must think quickly to save his boat and passengers. These impending perils become a challenge for the young pilot, however. He craves the danger which the river offers and thrives on using his ability to overcome its perils.

The river introduces Twain to various characters. He meets the rough crew, gamblers and painted women. By keeping a notebook on his trips as a young pilot, he is able to recall the traits of these characters in later years. An interesting fact, however, is that in writing about these trips and the variety of people they produced, he remembers only the good about them. He romanticizes the river people and makes them likable to his readers.

The Mississippi also introduces Twain to various experiences. In many instances he barely escapes losing

control of the boat because of his lack of knowledge. At other times he witnesses accidents either on his own steamboat or another. He is a part of daily bickerings between the crew and the pilot; at one point he is involved in a fight and is told to leave the boat.

Steamboating shows Twain aspects of life which he has not known before. Greed and corruption are everywhere. The steamboating business itself was full of corruption. It involved cutthroat tactics and inferior quality of materials in its race for business.[1] Other businessmen traveling on the steamboats were applying the same tactics. However, in Twain's discussion of the river as he remembers it, he speaks of appearance rather than reality, innocence rather than experience. He seems to feel it man's duty to ignore the evil in a world of perils.

The first section, then, presents a friendly river which introduces Twain to life of a different kind and presents challenges to his eager spirit. Eight years later, however, the geography of the river and the structure of the book change. After a twenty-one year absence, Twain returns to the river and later writes the second part. The river has changed a great deal during this time. Now Twain sees

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[1]Bernard De Voto, Mark Twain's America (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1951), pp. 108-109.

it in a more realistic light. It loses much of its glamour because of man's inventions. Many of the former challenges of the river have disappeared. The pilot, too, has lost his glamorous position since it is no longer such a dangerous and rewarding undertaking to pilot a steamboat down the Mississippi. Twain blames the lack of total darkness for much of this change. Instead of the pilot having to grope his way through the darkness, now he is helped by the beacons which are usually in front or behind him. The shore lines have been well marked so that the pilot need not use as much skill in keeping the boat in deep water. Many treacherous points have been taken away by altering the river's course.

Twain seems to decry these safety measures. One would expect that anyone, especially a former pilot, would be overjoyed that his profession has been made safer. These precautions would mean fewer steamboat accidents, a change which he would seem likely to want, especially after witnessing the death of his brother. He admits that "the peril from the snags is not now what it once was"[1] and "one may run in the fog now, with considerable security, and with a confidence unknown in the old days."[2] However, he calls the

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[1]Mark Twain, Life on the Mississippi, p. 232.

[2]Ibid., p. 233.

present "matter-of-fact days," which have taken the place of "anxious" times "when you were groping your way through solidified darkness."[1] Now steamboating is "nearly as safe and simple as driving stage" but not as exciting as it used to be.[2] Thus, he again backs up his idea in the first part of the book that it was the challenge and potential danger that made him like steamboating.

As the structure of the river itself is changed, so is the structure of the book. The river's challenge and beauty, so meaningful to Twain, are gone. This change alters the feelings of the narrator to such a degree that the second section of the book shows a different kind of world. Twain looks pessimistically at the world through which the river flows. The people and villages on shore are seen as much less desirable. "The town of New Madrid was looking very unwell"[3] and where the river has flooded, there are "signs all about of men's hard work gone to ruin."[4] There are:

> . . . tumbledown cabins . . . with grassless patches of dry ground here and there; a few felled trees, with skeleton cattle, mules, and horses, eating the leaves and gnawing the bark--no other food for them in the flood-wasted land.[5]

This impoverished world is different from that of the

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[1] Ibid.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Ibid., p. 223.

[4] Ibid., p. 252.

[5] Ibid., p. 253.

woodsmen who used to come out of the back woods with fruit and other things they had grown, ready for market. The towns along the shore have grown to cities and they, too, have lost much of their romantic quality. St. Louis has changed considerably. Even though it is "a great and prosperous and advancing city," much of its romance is gone. The bad pavements and sidewalks and "abundance of mud" are "familiar and satisfying," but "the ancient armies of drays, and struggling throngs of men, and mountains of freight, were gone." "The immemorial mile of cheap, foul doggeries remained, but business was dull with them; the multitudes of poison-swilling Irishmen had departed, and in their places were a few scattering handfuls of ragged Negroes. . . ."[1] The people who ride the steamboats now are more dignified; gone are many of the "colorful" characters. Men of distinction often use it as their mode of transportation and Twain is sorry that he cannot still mingle with the other kind. He explains:

> Why, in my time they used to call the barkeep' Bill, or Joe, or Tom, and slap him on the shoulder; I watched for that. But none of these people did it. Manifestly, a glory that once was had dissolved and vanished away in these twenty-one years.[2]

All in all, this section paints a different picture of the entire surroundings since the river has changed. The author

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[1] Ibid., p. 194.

[2] Ibid., p. 190.

also has changed. He has become older and more worldly; consequently, he fails to see many of the river's fascinating qualities. The things that used to be challenges are either gone or are not exciting anymore, a point which will be discussed in Chapters III and IV.

As the river wanders through the book, so do the thoughts of the author. The river winds its way from town to town and various happenings along the way serve as reminders of things past to the author. Twain deviates at will, telling a story of many years before when he is reminded of it. The river seems to encourage this kind of writing as it sets a mood of nostalgia, spreading these past events before the author. When the steamboat arrives in Vicksburg, Twain is reminded of a couple he met whom he calls "non-combatants." He interrupts his narrative to tell their story of the war. Then he is reminded of another story which he inserts "in this place merely because it is a good story, not because it belongs here--for it doesn't."[1] Passing by various other towns brings to mind stories which he stops to tell. Twain seems to feel compelled to embellish or explain wherever possible. Possibly this is due to the author's liking for talk or he may really think his readers need the explanation in order to understand the full

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[1] Ibid., p. 304.

meaning of the situation. Whatever the reason may be, he does it often, but this wandering adds to the style. As Howells said about him, "If something beyond or beside what he was saying occurred to him, he invited it into his page and made it as much at home there as the nature of it would suffer him."[1] Perhaps he feels that if his ideas are not expressed immediately, the time will not be ripe again and he will lose his chance. For example, the conflict between the social forces of the North and those of the South is still pronounced even after the war is over. Twain brings this conflict into his conversation, showing the plight of the Negro and how he has been mistreated. He uses various ways for giving his negative opinions of southern aristocracy, and Sir Walter Scott receives a blow whenever Twain feels the urge to do so. He blames Scott for everything that is bad about the southern conventional way of living; it is he who

> . . . sets the world in love with dreams and phantoms . . . with decayed and degraded systems of government; with the sillinesses and emptinesses . . . and sham chivalries of a brainless and worthless long-vanished society.[2]

Even the southern reporter is reprimanded for being afraid of women!

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[1]William Dean Howells, Literary Friends and Acquaintances (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1911), p. 321.

[2]Ibid., p. 375.

The over-all theme which Twain presents is brought about by the river. In the latter section he clearly states that its romance is gone. By using the river as a cross section of the country, he implies that the romance of past life is gone; on the shore this romance represents the customs and conventions of democratic nineteenth century America.[1] Twain feels that much of this democracy has vanished. The people have become too conscious of medieval customs, especially in the South. He talks of Baton Rouge with its capital building which he says resembles a castle. He finds that:

> By itself the imitation castle is doubtless harmless, and well enough; but as a symbol and sustainer of maudlin Middle-Age romanticism here in the midst of the plainest and sturdiest and infinitely greatest and worthiest of all the centuries the world has seen, it is necessarily a hurtful thing and a mistake.[2]

On the river this romance is the struggle by the individual against forces that control human existence.[3] This, of course, is the river's challenging the pilot with dangerous reefs, low water and rushing currents. All of these have been taken away and the world is left to those who will try to make the most of it.

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[1]Roger B. Saloman, Twain and the Image of History (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1961), p. 87.

[2]Mark Twain, Life on the Mississippi, pp. 333-334.

[3]Saloman, loc. cit.

Twain is unwilling to accept this change. It seems that by his frequent references to it, he is trying to convince himself that the change is inevitable and acceptance is the only alternative. Or perhaps he may mention it often because he is basically a romantic. Critics who have studied Twain find that he ignores much of the sordid part of river life and sentimentalizes it a great deal. He is willing to overlook or perhaps just does not see the life of the gamblers and the painted women. Twain scholars have found that steamboating in the days which he describes involved many sordid experiences, but Twain fails to discuss them. Whatever the reason for his constant mention of the river's change, it is an important element in the book.

Thus, the river, as it winds its way through Life on the Mississippi, is Twain's vehicle for exposing his readers to the various experiences he has had and people he has met. It is the river that leads him to various places, reminders of a past which will not return. From there the Mississippi inspires him to talk about life as he sees it.

With Twain's return to the river it became clear to him the finality with which the world of his youth had disappeared.[1] He was able, though, as time went on to incorporate both the real and the unreal aspects of the

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[1]Andrews, op. cit., p. 209.

river into various novels.

Structurally the river is important in Tom Sawyer and Pudd'nhead Wilson also. The river is important in Tom Sawyer in that it plays a part in the basic conflict. The major conflict seems to be the difference in outlook of the child and the adult. The river often becomes a mode of escape, since Tom crosses the river to the island when he has come into conflict with the adult world. Because he is forbidden to play on the boats, he does so anyway, another instance in which the river becomes involved. Swimming in the river is also part of the major conflict between Aunt Polly and Tom because Tom usually goes swimming during school hours.

Likewise, in Pudd'nhead Wilson the river has a structural importance. It makes the whole racial issue, on which the novel is based, more meaningful since this issue is more pertinent in some locales than in others. As discussed in the chapter about Hannibal, the location of this town divided the North from the South and the East from the West. Hannibal appears in Pudd'nhead Wilson as Dawson's Landing, pinpointed as "on the Missouri side of the Mississippi, half a day's journey per steamboat, below St. Louis."[1]

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[1]Mark Twain, Pudd'nhead Wilson and Those Extraordinary Twins (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1922), p. 1.

Although this location points to Cape Girardeau instead of Hannibal, since Hannibal is above St. Louis, one still finds the drowsy town which he describes as Hannibal in his autobiographical works. This, of course, gives the reader the idea that not only does every river he mentions become the Mississippi, but so does every small river town become Hannibal. Just as he mentions the Mississippi in his travels abroad, so Hannibal becomes Dawson's Landing and St. Petersburg in the Tom and Huck stories. Making every town Hannibal shows even more the great influence that Twain's youth had on him.

Thus, one pictures the southern town where Negroes are slaves. Here there is the constant threat of the white man's sending the Negro "down the river." The proximity of the river enables Tom to escape, and Roxy thinks of it as a possible means of committing suicide. Roxy knows the Mississippi. When she is on the steamboat supposedly being sent up the river, she can feel by the way the boat is going that she is being sent the dreaded way--down the river. She knows immediately that she has been tricked.

Twain knows the river well and utilizes it to the fullest. The first level of use--structural--would seem to be a full utilization, but Twain does not stop there. His love for the river shows itself in still other ways in his writing. On the second level it becomes an image.

CHAPTER III

RIVER IMAGES AND LANGUAGE DEVICES

There are various aspects of river imagery which permeate Twain's writing, and a conscious study of these images shows that a distinct pattern seems to evolve from them. It is well known to critics that Twain began writing various books about the river during a time in his life when success in journalism and lecturing was coming his way. At this time he collaborated with Charles Dudley Warner in writing The Gilded Age and wrote Tom Sawyer and the first half of Life on the Mississippi. The world was his oyster as people flocked to hear the author of the best-seller The Innocents Abroad. However, times began to change for Twain. As he got older, he began to realize that life was not all success and people were not always what they promised. Moral issues, such as the Negro's plight, plagued him throughout this time. Business men who promised a great deal began to show themselves as searchers for an easy dollar. At first these things puzzled Twain, but eventually they bothered him deeply and he became pessimistic. His writing reflects this growing pessimism. Works written during this time reveal through plot, characters and theme that Twain and the world were fast losing the rapport they once held.

Twain's imagery and especially his river imagery show this change of attitude. A close examination of images in his early works reveals the humorist who is generally in tune with the world. However, this attitude changes in his later works and thus the images change too.

To give a quick over-all view of this change in attitude, one might examine Twain's use of the military image in connection with the river. When the boy wants to be taught the art of piloting, he says, "I planned a siege against my pilot, and at the end of three hard days he surrendered."[1] Again, when told he must learn the river thoroughly, his response is "my memory was never loaded with anything but blank cartridges."[2] When he proves his inability to remember, his "gun-powdery chief went off with a bang, of course, and then went on loading and firing until he was out of adjectives."[3] However, he only "carried just so many rounds of ammunition."[4] When Mr. Bixby is angered by his partner, he "gave him no greeting whatever, but simply surrendered the wheel and marched out of the pilot-house."[5]

This constant allusion to military imagery also seems

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[1]Mark Twain, Life on the Mississippi, p. 45.

[2]Ibid., p. 51.

[3]Ibid., p. 63.

[4]Ibid.

[5]Ibid., p. 67.

to tell a great deal about Twain as a man as well as an author. His biographers tell us that he joined the military for a short while in the Civil War on the southern side, but soon left. Little is said about his reasons for quitting, but one has the feeling that he felt war was inane. Before his return to the river, this military imagery does not become violent. He has the Civil War on his mind, has read accounts of it and uses it in a sense which makes it seem apart from an actual war. It is almost the imagery of children playing at the game with only a slight "bang" here and there. No real explosion is expressed here. Also the marching and surrendering make one think of childhood games. However, when he returned to the river after his long absence, he heard a great deal about the atrocities of the war. Especially in the South he says, "Every man you meet was in the war; and every lady you meet saw the war. The war is the great chief topic of conversation."[1] He calls it a "tremendous episode" and says, "It gives the inexperienced stranger a better idea of what a vast and comprehensive calamity invasion is than he can ever get by reading books at the fireside."[2] Thus, Twain's return to the river had many effects on him. It made him extremely conscious of the war so that, upon returning to his writing of Life on the

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[1] Ibid., p. 363.

[2] Ibid., p. 364.

Mississippi, his imagery changes. Instead of the military allusions being those of playing at war, the war becomes a real thing. At this point he stops talking about shooting at random and starts talking about killing and murdering. The "bang" has changed to greater noises. The marching and surrendering are no longer as simple. For instance:

> The towboat and the railroad had done their work, and done it well and completely. The mighty bridge . . . had done its share in the slaughter and spoliation. Remains of former steamboatmen told me . . . that the bridge doesn't pay. Still, it can be no sufficient compensation to a corpse to know that the dynamite that laid him out was not of as good quality as it had been supposed to be.[1]

The word "killed" appears several times as he is describing the decline of steamboating. When he tells of a chain of sunken rocks in the river, he says they are "admirably arranged to capture and kill steamboats on bad nights. A good many steamboat corpses lie buried there."[2] There is no doubt that the talk of war impressed Twain; it became less fiction and more fact to him. Probably this change in attitude was brought about basically because of the difference in his age between the two contacts with the Civil War. As a young man, he entered the war as a lark and failed to recognize its importance. Upon his return he is able to grasp the full impact the war had on the nation. Through

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[1] Ibid., p. 194.

[2] Ibid., p. 211.

his river images, he strengthens his idea of the change in the river itself. He carefully weaves this devastating and destructive idea into the change in the Mississippi. It, too, is a place for children and games in the first section, but it becomes a real destroyer in the latter section. The challenges and excitements have not just been taken out of the river, but they have been slaughtered and are now mere corpses. A vast amount of "spoliation" has gone on which reduces the river even more to the plight of the South in the War.

As indicated before, Twain's river imagery is varied. Many of his images are concerned with steamboating, many with the pilot and other riverboat men, many with the nature and society which border the river and finally with the river itself. A close examination of each of these will elucidate further this change which came over Twain.

Steamboating was very exciting to young Sam when he sat on the river's edge at Hannibal and watched the boats come in, shed their cargo and then leave for the unknown world. So, when he became a pilot, he absorbed all that his young mind could possibly hold. His steamboating experiences, of course, became such a part of him that they became an important image in his writing. To him, the steamboat was like a palace to a king. It was the manifestation of a regal life which he was sure awaited him in a land far away

from Hannibal. For example, when the steamboat arrives in Hannibal, he describes its magnificence:

> Assembled there, the people fastened their eyes upon the coming boat as upon a wonder they are seeing for the first time. And the boat is rather a hand-some sight, too . . . she has two tall fancy-topped chimneys, with a gilded device of some kind swung between them; a fanciful pilot-house, all glass and "gingerbread," perched on top of the texas deck behind them . . . the texas deck is fenced and ornamented with clean white railings . . . the furnace doors are open and the fires glaring bravely; the upper decks are black with passengers.[1]

This particular passage is especially indicative of Twain's images before his return to the river. Here he uses grandiose terms to describe the steamboat which he is remembering as a wonderful object. As he thinks back to his days of steamboating, the boat reflects his ideas of magnificence and grandeur which are indicated by his choice of words. The idea that the people "fastened their eyes" shows that they were indeed gazing at a wonder. The boat is a "hand-some sight," with "fancy-topped chimneys," a "gilded device" and a "fanciful pilot-house, all glass and gingerbread." The texas deck is "ornamented" and the fires are "glaring bravely." All of these words produce images of a steamboat that is almost a fairy-tale vehicle. He seems to be able to think of nothing bad about the sight of the steamboat. The vision he has as he remembers the arrival of

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[1] Ibid., pp. 33-34.

the steamboat is similar to that of other youths when they dream of a knight in shining armor coming to carry them off to more adventuresome places. To a modern youth, the rocket plays the part that the steamboat does for Twain. It is his "rocket" which will transport him to a place where he will have adventure and excitement, a place void of everything distasteful to him. Therefore, his use of fanciful terms reflects this feeling that the steamboat brings. As he writes this particular passage, he has been away from the river for several years, so he remembers his boyish wonder. No other association with the river has come about to put a blight on this excitement.

In another instance his use of the simile also tells much about Twain's love of the steamboat and much about the author himself. The boat is "clean as a drawingroom," the boiler deck is "spacious as a church," and looking down the long gilded saloon is like "gazing through a splendid tunnel."[1] Each one of these similes makes the image more pointed. By the comparison of the boat and the drawingroom, the boiler deck and the church, and the saloon and the tunnel, Twain seems to picture something splendid for each one. Twain's use of objects of grandeur in describing the boat seems to tell a great deal about this man. For him the

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[1] Ibid., p. 53.

steamboat serves as an object of reverence. Some people turn to the church, others to the magnificence of wealth, but Twain is able to derive his satisfaction from his association with the steamboat. When he returns to the river after his long absence, he recalls this love for the steamboat:

> I went aft, climbed over the rail of the ladies cabin and from that point jumped aboard the Roe landing on that spacious boiler-deck of hers. It was like arriving at home at the farmhouse after a long absence.[1]

To Twain, the steamboat represents security and peace. The boat also satisfies his need to belong. While he is a pilot on the steamboat, he is able to cope with life's problems because the steamboat is there to shelter him.

This sense of belonging is seen previously in The Gilded Age when Washington and Clay get their first view of the pilot house:

> Now their happiness was complete. This cosy little house, built entirely of glass and commanding a marvelous prospect in every direction, was a magician's throne to them and their enjoyment of the place was simply boundless.[2]

This time it is not just a throne but a magician's throne, certainly a place of ecstasy for a boy. In all of these

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[1]Charles Neider (ed.), The Autobiography of Mark Twain (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1959), p. 80.

[2]Mark Twain and Charles Dudley Warner, The Gilded Age (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1915), p. 43.

examples the steamboat is a vehicle to be revered, an object full of excitement, wonder and even magic. All of these terms show that Twain is remembering the steamboat as a boy, not as a man. He has not yet had the opportunity of viewing the steamboat in his maturity.

Twain seems to view the steamboat as a real person, referring to it as "her." This, of course, is not unique with Twain. Homer refers to his ships as "she" and Richard Dana in Two Years Before the Mast does the same. However, Twain seems to give his boats a great deal of personality. Bearing emotions of a human being, they almost come alive. He remarks that the boat "went tearing away toward the shore as if she were about scared to death."[1] When Twain is learning to be a pilot, he comes close to having an accident but "the boat hesitated, halted, pressed her nose among the boughs . . . then reluctantly backed away."[2] One gets the idea here of a frightened puppy whose master is there to protect it. In the same way Twain seems to want to protect the steamboat from any danger. To him it is not just a vehicle which carries passengers whom he must protect, but he feels he must protect the steamboat itself. It, too, seems alive, thus worthy of protection.

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[1]Mark Twain, Life on the Mississippi, p. 74.

[2]Ibid., p. 76.

Not only are the steamboats clean and magnificent looking, but also they create much excitement when they are raced. When the boats are ready to start:

> . . . two guns boom a good-by . . . two plaintive solos linger on the air a few waiting seconds, two mighty choruses burst forth--and here they come! Brass bands bray "Hail Columbia," huzza after huzza thunders from the shores, and the stately creatures go whistling by like the wind.[1]

Here the excitement is vivified by the auditory images and again the romantic Twain reveals himself. The contrast between the "boom" of the guns and the "plaintive solos" creates a dramatic effect which emphasizes Twain's excitement. The noise that "bursts forth," the bands that "bray" and the cheering that "thunders" as the "stately creatures go whistling by" all show that this is the height of excitement for Twain. The noise is almost overbearing, but he does not seem to mind because this is life at its utmost. This is the symbol of activity which a boy loves.

But then, he returns to the river and finds the racing is over. Gone is the excitement that the steamboats produced. Now the excitement is milder. "We met two steamboats at New Madrid. Two steamboats in sight at once! An infrequent spectacle now in the lonesome Mississippi."[2] The excitement in the first instance is profound with its noise

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[1] Ibid., p. 147.

[2] Ibid., p. 225.

and activity. Yet, in the second instance, the excitement comes from seeing two steamboats at once. No noise or activity is indicated on the "lonesome Mississippi." Twain is grasping at straws, for he still calls the sight a "spectacle," a word which recalls the romantic spirit. Yet, he seems to realize that the real excitement is gone and only a faint glimmer remains as he goes on to describe the river's vast loneliness.

A different kind of image, yet pertinent to this discussion, is Twain's description of the "ancient tub called the Paul Jones" which he takes to New Orleans on his first trip. "For the sum of sixteen dollars I had the scarred and tarnished splendors of 'her' main saloon principally to myself, for she was not a creature to attract the eye of wiser travelers."[1] The idea that it is an "ancient tub" is almost descriptive enough. It gives the impression that even though it is very old, it may not have "seen better days" for it is a "tub" in the first place. Even though it is "scarred and tarnished," it still carries "splendors" for the young traveler who is experiencing this excitement for the first time. Here again one sees Twain as a romantic sentimentalist. He remembers the boat in romantic terms. It could only be an object of splendor to the

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[1] Ibid., p. 38.

uninitiated. But it is still a "creature" to "wiser travelers." Even though the Paul Jones is old, Twain is still fond of it. To him it is a friend and the first of a long line of steamboats to come. Yet when Twain returns to the river, even the Paul Jones which gave him "scarred and tarnished" pleasures has vanished. It met its fate where "a good many steamboat corpses lie buried . . . out of sight beside a chain of sunken rocks."[1] Even though Twain feels some sorrow for the death of his old friend, his eulogy is not in keeping with the sentiment he once felt. "She knocked her bottom out, and went down like a pot."[2] This is all that is said. For a boat that held splendors for him once, going down "like a pot" does not indicate the same feeling of endearment.

Although Life on the Mississippi usually is thought of as two sections which are divided by the twenty-first chapter, Twain actually wrote chapters four through sixteen before his return to the river and then added chapters one, two and three and chapters seventeen through twenty after his return. These were added to the first section because they were pertinent to the material and would aid the continuity of the book. However, a close examination of these chapters reveals a change in the tone of the imagery,

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[1] Ibid., p. 211. [2] Ibid.

similar to that in the latter section. The last chapter of the section written before his return is chapter sixteen. This is the chapter mentioned above in which Twain delights in relating the thrills of steamboat racing. "The two great steamers back into the stream, and lie there jockeying a moment, apparently watching each other's slightest movement, like sentient creatures."[1] There are "people, people everywhere; the shores, the housetops, the steamboats, the ships are packed with them . . . [ready]to welcome these racers."[2] Twain creates much excitement about the races and the marvelous feats that some steamboats have accomplished.

The next chapter, written eight years later, is a different story. It begins with the sentence, "These dry details are of importance in one particular."[3] He then proceeds to tell about how the Mississippi makes itself shorter. What a change from the preceding chapter! In the former chapter, when he gives the details of some fast steamboat trips, they are exciting. But when he returns to this information, it becomes "dry details" and then the subject is changed. In the rest of the book one is certainly aware of the change in steamboating and in Twain's attitude toward it. Steamboating is declining rapidly. "Half a dozen lifeless steamboats, a mile of empty wharves

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[1] Ibid., p. 147. [2] Ibid. [3] Ibid., p. 153.

. . . stretched asleep in a wide and soundless vacancy, where the serried hosts of commerce used to contend."[1] Gone is the activity and words such as "lifeless," "empty," "stretched asleep" and "soundless vacancy" take the place of the excitement of the "stately creatures" that go "whistling by like the wind."

Huckleberry Finn, which Twain published after his return to the Mississippi, also gives evidence of this change. While Huck and Jim are peacefully contented on their small raft, the steamboat becomes something to fear since it is larger and can easily destroy a small raft. Rather than a stately creature with its furnaces blazing proudly, it becomes a monster that is after the two.

> We could hear her pounding along, but we didn't see her good till she was close. She aimed right for us. . . . She was a big one . . . looking like a black cloud with rows of glow-worms around it; but all of a sudden she bulged out, big and scary, with a long row of wide-open furnace doors shining like red-hot teeth, and her monstrous bows and guards hanging right over us. . . . She come smashing straight through the raft.[2]

This time the boat is a "black cloud" instead of a clean drawingroom. Since evil is often considered black and good, white, in literature, this is an obvious change in the "personality" of the steamboat. This time, instead of being stately, the boat "bulged out, big and scary." The fanciful

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[1] Ibid., p. 193.

[2] Mark Twain, The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, p. 94.

chimneys and clean white railings are gone and in their place are "monstrous bows and guards." The two divergent descriptions hardly seem to be written by the same man; certainly they indicate a change in attitude toward the object.

An interesting transition seems to have taken place here. Since the steamboat seems to have become the monster, now the raft becomes the place of solace to those seeking it--in this case Huck and Jim. This, too, indicates the change which has come over Twain. Instead of the large, grandiose steamboat, a place of excitement, activity and magic as a mode of escape, the characters have chosen a simple vehicle from which all of the fanciful items have been taken away. Only the bare essentials of survival remain and sometimes even these are swept overboard and the victims must seek out new ways of survival. Twain seems to be commenting that this is what life has been reduced to. Gone are the happy days of his youth when life was all a great adventure and one could find happiness by boarding a steamboat headed for far-off places. In its place is a crude raft which will not take Huck and Jim to unknown lands, but only (they hope) to safety where they will no longer be bothered by society. Thus, in his writing after his return to the river, the raft seems to have taken on the major function of the steamboat. It is now the mode of

solace and escape.

What seems to have caused this complete change? No one can tell exactly what came over Twain, but one can surmise that age and reluctance to change had a great deal to do with it. Probably when he returned and found that steamboating had been replaced by the railroad, he became reminiscent of the "good old days." The older one gets, the less one is able to accept progress, since it gives a feeling of being left behind. Twain seemed to feel that the world was passing him by, leaving no hope of recalling his former days. Also, through Twain's viewpoint of this death of steamboating one is able to see his pessimistic feeling toward humanity. Steamboating, to him, was important and his only world for part of his life. By getting rid of steamboating, society was getting rid of the important things in life. Society did not care about the things that really counted. Since all that was left for the steamboat was the very little trade that the railroads did not want, the remains of the past days were a hideous reminder of what had been. This may account for the steamboat turning into a grotesque monster.

The various images of the steamboat are only one indication of Twain's growing pessimism. Another indication is his treatment of the people with whom he associates. Again one sees the similarity between the images in his

writing before his return to the river and after. Probably the best examples of the people written about during his early works are the people he met on the steamboat. Certainly one would not consider the pilot, the crew, the gamblers, and the painted women representative of humanity but this is Twain's society during his years on the river. It is a different kind of society, however, for it stands for what is good. To Twain, the people on the steamboat represented a free people, a freedom which he felt every individual deserved and which he sought all of his life. One does not find much allusion to the sordid part of life on the steamboat. Gamblers are referred to now and then, but the painted women are ignored. Whether he actually did not realize the sordid side or chose to ignore it is debatable, but he was not naive and surely not stupid, so it seems that he simply ignored it. Also, human beings tend to forget the bad and remember only the good about a generally happy experience. Twain himself says, "When I find a well-drawn character in fiction or biography I generally take a warm personal interest in him, for the reason that I have known him before--met him on the river."[1]

The admiration which Twain holds for the pilot's position is obvious in many works. In Life on the Missis-

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[1]Mark Twain, Life on the Mississippi, p. 163.

sippi he tells of his first experience as a pilot. Here his choice of words is very acute. He explains that his "heart-beat fluttered" and he "held his breath." He was "flayed" by Mr. Bixby for cowardice and "was stung" but admired his easy confidence.[1] Twain sees the pilot as a man who seems to know everything and "can't forget anything."[2] He must have "a cool, calm courage that no peril can shake."[3] Here he gives his message in a few concise terms. The pilot's "cool, calm courage," for example, is especially appealing because it is not only concisely descriptive but also euphoniously alliterative.

The way in which Twain displays this admiration for the pilot is amusing. "In the matter of profanity . . . [he] was sublime."[4] When young Sam offers to do a job for the mate on the Paul Jones, he says, "If a rag-picker had offered to do a diplomatic service for the Emperor of Russia, the monarch could not have been more astounded."[5] He chooses the lowest form he can think of, the rag-picker, to show the humility which he feels, and the use of "Emperor" shows the reverence he feels for the pilot. The two opposites are well-chosen to portray Twain's image of himself next to that of the pilot. In one instance he gives a

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[1] Ibid., p. 45. [2] Ibid., p. 111. [3] Ibid., p. 113.
[4] Ibid., p. 141. [5] Ibid., p. 40.

description of the pilot as swearing, bearded, with red and blue women tattooed on his right arm. Yet he uses words such as "majesty" to describe him and endeavors to talk just like he does.[1] The watchman is a drunkard, uses profanity and bad grammar and is a liar, but Twain sits "speechless, enjoying, shuddering, wondering, worshiping."[2] The choice of "majesty" to describe a character like the pilot and the term "worshiping" to denote his feeling for the drunken watchman again points out the awe and respect that Twain held for the men of the river. It is almost as if he has chosen the pilot, crude as he is, as his father image. The boy has no father, so he turns his "child worship" toward the one who reflects the life of the river. The love for the river has become so deep that he is willing to turn this love toward anyone connected with the Mississippi--even the watchman. However, when Twain returns to the river, this love and respect for the pilot has disappeared. This time instead of just explaining that he is irritated with the pilot, he says, "I had a mighty impulse to destroy him, but it seemed to me that killing, in any ordinary way, would be too good for him."[3] The idea that he wants to kill the pilot is foreign to his way of thinking in the first section, but he goes even farther to say that killing in "any

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[1] Ibid., p. 41. [2] Ibid., pp. 42-43. [3] Ibid., p. 201.

ordinary way, would be too good for him." In other words he is so angry with him that he wishes to torture him unmercifully because he is not worthy of an ordinary death. Surely this is a different character from the majestic person in the first section.

One of the most pointed of all Twain's exaggerations is his reference to "sin" or "crime" in the latter part. He seems to use this often when referring to piloting. When he fights with Brown, a pilot for whom he has no respect, he soon realizes, "I had committed the crime of crimes--I had lifted my hand against a pilot on duty! I supposed I was booked for the penitentiary sure."[1] Twain seems to use this imagery for a special reason. To him, piloting was of vast importance. During his youth it satisfied a great need for adventure and he wanted it more than anything else. He looked up to the pilot who was seemingly independent and free to think as he chose. To him, the pilot was like the cowboy who always did good deeds for people, but was never tied down to one society. He was free to roam wherever he chose. The pilot, then, represented this freedom which Twain craved. Therefore, he was king over everything else around. However, when Twain returns to the river and finds the pilot's freedom has been hindered by all the regulations

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[1] Ibid., pp. 172-173.

forced on him, he uses the strongest images to describe this change. Since there is little evidence of Twain's swearing in his writing (although he often shocked Livy with his profane mutterings), the strong language which he turns to is concerned with murder and sin. This best describes his feeling for the change in the pilot.

A definite indication of this change in attitude comes in his discussion of Brown. Although this chapter comes in the first section, it was written after his return to the river and added on. This time the pilot is a "middle-aged, long, slimy, bony, smooth-shaven, [this, of course, makes him less masculine in Twain's eyes] horse-faced, ignorant, stingy, malicious, snarling, fault-hunting, mote-magnifying tyrant."[1] It seems he just can not find enough ugly words to describe him. The pilot is still a ruler, but Twain's impression of this ruler has changed. Before, he was a regal character who merited reverence and respect. Twain gives the impression that the early king is loved by his subjects. However, now he is a tyrant, a man who no longer merits respect but only the hatred of his subjects.

It must be noted that Brown is only briefly mentioned in the section written first, but after his return Twain

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[1] Ibid., p. 164.

tells the whole incident of the fight with Brown and how Twain is the victor when Brown is asked to leave the boat. It seems that all the sordid relationships come back to him when he re-visits the river. Because of the great change in piloting, he is reminded that the pilot was not always majestic as he had remembered him. The change is so great when he returns that forgotten bad memories are stirred.

The fact that the pilot has turned into this kind of a monster is very important in this discussion of Twain's pessimism. Just like the steamboat, even the revered pilot has become grotesque. This change of attitude toward the pilot also is indicative of Twain's outlook toward society. To him the society on shore was something he wished to escape. In his youth by taking refuge in piloting, he was able to escape the monotony of the humdrum shore life. However, the society on shore was beginning to infiltrate the society on the steamboat, causing this great change in the riverboat personnel.

To fully understand the impact of this change, one must look at Twain's treatment of the people on shore. To him, the shore people seem lazy and too complacent. They are not sparked with any initiative or enthusiasm, much to the dismay of Twain. He views them as only existing with little aim in life.

Twain's description of Hannibal, St. Petersburg, or

Dawson's Landing--they are all the same--illustrates the point. The drowsy town is made more vivid with the "streets empty, or pretty nearly so" and the clerks "with their splint-bottomed chairs tilted back against the walls, chins on breasts, hats slouched over their faces, asleep." The sow and her litter "loafing along the sidewalk, doing a good business in watermelon rinds and seeds" and "the fragrant town drunkard asleep in the shadow" point out the laziness and apathy of the town.[1] In reading this literal description of the town, one must remember Twain's viewpoint at the moment. When he is describing the people in Hannibal, he is right there, viewing them as one of them. As is common of human nature, the people with whom one has contact every day often do not seem as interesting as those heard about in other places. The same is true of the shore people when he views them at close range from the boat. When Twain's boat is traveling down a different channel to avoid a rise in the river, it is close to shore and he sees:

> Crazy rail fences sticking a foot or two above the water, with one or two jeans-clad, chills-racked yellow-faced male miserables roosting on the top rail, elbows on knees jaws in hands, grinding tobacco and discharging the result at floating ships through crevices left by lost teeth.[2]

By using "crazy" to describe the fences, Twain relays the

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[1] Ibid., p. 33.

[2] Ibid., p. 91.

idea that these fences have been put together with little thought or care. From this one precise word the reader learns much about these people. The fences are put up in a haphazard manner with the hope that they will stay. The people probably would not care, though, if they did fall down just as long as no one insisted they be repaired. Also the men are not just "male" but "male miserables"--what better way to describe their wretched condition? Then, to enhance the description, the reader is even told that their teeth are missing--not just a few here or there but enough to make "crevices" through which to expectorate.

However, the shore people are viewed differently when the steamboat is not close to shore. Because Twain is no longer one of them but is viewing the shore now as an onlooker, the society is viewed in more sentimental terms. When Tom Sawyer and his friends decide to become pirates, they do so because society has been cruel to them. But when they finally embark on the raft and are beyond the middle of the river, the sight looks different to them. "Now the raft was passing before the distant town. Two or three glimmering lights showed where it lay, peacefully sleeping."[1] The "distant town" has "glimmering lights" and it is "peacefully" asleep. The boys have forgotten their feelings of resent-

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[1]Mark Twain, The Adventures of Tom Sawyer, p. 105.

ment toward the society that has forsaken them and now the faults are overlooked as they see them from a distance. The boys are like many human beings who wish to escape the problems of home, but forget about them when they see their homes from a distance.

Although these people on shore are made more romantic as Twain moves away from them, still they depict the life which he is trying to escape. By becoming a pilot to whom as the supreme commander of excitement he looked for hope, he was able to escape this society. However, after Twain returned to the river, he found that even the society on shore was invading the steamboat. One was no longer free to do as one chose since more controls had been put on piloting.

Although many of the people on the return trip are the same kinds of people who were riding the steamboats on his earlier trips, he sees them in a different light. As discussed before, Twain seemed to ignore the sordid part of steamboating in his early writings. He does not seem to notice the wicked men and women who are interested in nothing but easy money. In thinking back about his early adventures, he does not seem to remember the degenerates who could put a blight on his vision of the steamboat. Although many of the pilots were crude with a somewhat "foggy" past, he still sees them as heroes. However, his return trip

shows different kinds of people. Now the flaws in the river personnel and the passengers are revealed. One has the idea that Twain is seeing them as they really are for the first time. Time had made him forget that everyone was not as free from sin as he wanted to believe. Now that he has returned, an older and wiser man, he sees both the bad and the good of life on a steamboat.

Since the steamboat's function is relinquished to the raft in his later writing, even Huck is able to give expression to this invasion of privacy when he and Jim have finally slipped away from the Duke and Dauphin and are safe on the raft. He says:

> . . . it did seem so good to be free again and all by ourselves on the big river and nobody to bother us. I had to skip around a bit, and jump up and crack my heels a few times, I couldn't help it; but about the third crack, I noticed a sound that I knowed mighty well. . . . It was the king and the duke.
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> So I wilted right down onto the planks, then, and give up; and it was all I could do to keep from crying.[1]

Thus, society has invaded Huck and Jim's raft just as it has invaded Twain's steamboat. Life on shore and life on the boat have become fused; therefore, he can no longer turn to it for his former feeling of peace and contentment. As discussed in Chapters II and IV, a complete change has come over the personnel of the steamboat. The crew has been

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[1]Mark Twain, The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, p. 205.

unionized and the mate is wearing uniforms so now there is no "mistaking the mate for the cook, and the captain for the barber."[1] Safety measures have been added to protect passengers and crew. All of these things are an invasion from the society on shore, an invasion which Twain refuses to accept. Since he dislikes the shore people, the idea that they are now part of his beloved steamboat is completely distasteful to him.

There is still another aspect of river imagery that must be discussed. This concerns the river and the other elements of nature around it. Although in some ways the river and other aspects of nature could be discussed separately, they will be put together in this discussion since Twain's use of the two is so closely associated. Again, through an examination of the river itself, one is able to see the change of theme and mood of the author.

Consciously, he describes the beautiful river scenes. The reflection of the sunset on the water, the vastness of the universe at night, the shoreline with its forests of green and brown and the rain making ripples on the water devoutly interest him. He stresses these even in his personal letters to Livy, where he tries to make her see the importance of this beauty:

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[1]Mark Twain, Life on the Mississippi, p. 211.

> It was fascination to see the day steal gradually upon this vast silent world . . . the marvels of shifting light and shade and color and dappled reflections, that followed, were bewitching to see . . . it was all worth getting up for, I tell you.[1]

He continues by telling her that he will begin rising at four so he can see this sight every morning. After this beautiful description he seems to feel he must add emphasis to convince her of its beauty. He has thought out the image he wishes to create and then has produced it. The emphatic "I tell you" at the end makes it even more definite.

Probably others before Twain and many since have been strongly attached to the Mississippi. But few have been so involved with it as he. The words that he uses to describe it and its effects are unusual to use for a river yet very convincing. He often refers to the river's majesty and grandeur. It has "grace," "beauty" and "poetry" and "graceful curves," and one sees "nothing but all manner of pretty pictures in it."[2] It appears in another source as a "vague, vast sweep of star-gemmed water,"[3] and "a majestic waste of water."[4] One feels the sense of awe in Twain for the

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[1]Dixon Wecter (ed.), The Love Letters of Mark Twain (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1949), p. 19.

[2]Mark Twain, Life on the Mississippi, p. 78.

[3]Mark Twain, The Adventures of Tom Sawyer, p. 105.

[4]Ibid., p. 112.

Mississippi. However, one can not help but be amused at Twain's choice of words. The indefinite language of "poetry" and "graceful curves" is the same kind of language for which he castigates James Fenimore Cooper. He calls words such as these a "gilt-edged, tree-calf, hand-tooled, seven-dollar Friendship's Offering" when he is criticizing Cooper.[1] Also he criticizes Cooper for not using "a simple and straightforward style."[2] He says Cooper has "high talent for inaccurate observation."[3] Nevertheless, Twain uses this language himself when he thinks back about the Mississippi before his return trip. No grandiose term seems to be too good for it as he endeavors to use the most elaborate word. The river comes alive to Twain as it expresses various moods. It is "exultant," "deliciously exhilarating," "breezy," and dancing,[4] all allusive Cooperian words.

As the boat is traveling down the river the visual imagery is prominent.

> A clean-stemmed dead tree waved a single leafy bough that glowed like a flame in the unobstructed splendor that was flowing from the sun. There were graceful

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[1]Mark Twain, "Fenimore Cooper's Literary Offenses," The Portable Mark Twain, Bernard De Voto, editor (New York: The Viking Press, Inc., 1946), p. 543.

[2]Ibid., p. 544.

[3]Ibid., p. 549.

[4]Mark Twain, Life on the Mississippi, p. 100.

> curves, reflected images, woody heights, soft distances; and over the whole scene, far and near, the dissolving lights drifted steadily, enriching it every passing moment with new marvels of coloring.[1]

This account, having been written before his return, again illustrates the tone which he has used in other similar accounts. Here he portrays peace and contentment. The flowery language is still evident as the "single leafy bough" "glowed like a flame." There is "unobstructed splendor" "flowing from the sun." All of this is indefinite and flowery. Again he seems compelled to find the grandest term possible. The curves are "graceful," distances "soft" and lights "dissolving." "Enriching" and "new marvels" also add to this fanciful scene. Each one of these images seems to be hand-picked by the author to convey the highest and most revered attitude possible toward the river.

As mentioned above concerning the steamboat and the riverboat people, Twain seems to have lost any actual perspective and as he looks back on these river objects, he sentimentalizes them to the point that they become an artist's reproduction and not a real thing. Likewise the river takes on this same appearance. It becomes a beautiful picture for one to gaze at in a gallery, but does not reveal reality.

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[1] Ibid., p. 79.

Probably one of the most delightful descriptions of nature comes from Tom Sawyer when the boys decide to live on Jackson's Island as pirates. When they awaken after their first night's sleep, Tom sees "the cool gray dawn" with "beaded dewdrops upon the leaves and grasses." "A white layer of ashes" covers the fire, and a "thin blue breath of smoke" rises "straight into the air." ". . . not a sound obtruded upon great Nature's meditation." Then as the morning whitens and sounds multiply, a catbird trills "out her imitations of her neighbors in a rapture of enjoyment." The squirrels and bluejays chatter and butterflies flutter. All three boys strip and are soon "chasing after and tumbling over each other in the shallow limpid water of the white sandbar." They drink clear, cold spring water and find it "sweetened" with "a wildwood charm." They fry fresh fish and bacon and after breakfast they go on a hike where they find "plenty of things to be delighted with, but nothing to be astonished at."[1] Here Twain entwines all the senses to his advantage as he is able to capture in a short passage the morning of a young boy who is free to do as he chooses.

But again, one sees Twain's dependence on flowery terms. It is not just a dawn, but a "cool gray dawn" and the dewdrops are "beaded." Even the smoke is a "thin blue

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[1]Mark Twain, The Adventures of Tom Sawyer, pp. 110-113.

breath." As Twain goes through each sense appeal, he seems eager to choose words which sound fanciful and colorful to describe nature. Everything is in keeping with the world of the youth and the author, too, has become young again as he writes about it. As he continues, he is caught up in the mood until he reaches the climax of grandiose terms when he tells how

> they tramped . . . among solemn monarchs of the forest, hung from their crowns to the ground with a drooping regalia of grapevines. Now and then they came upon snug nooks carpeted with grass and jeweled with flowers.[1]

Nothing escapes the fancy of Tom Sawyer or of Mark Twain.

Not only Twain but his characters have this esteem for the river. The people in The Gilded Age contemplate the "marvelous" and "sombre" river and "so awed were they by the grandeur and solemnity of the scene before them . . . their voices were subdued to a low and reverent tone."[2]

Although this is a majestic river, it is not aloof. Twain is able to know the river as he would a book. "It was not a book to be read once and thrown aside, for it had a new story to tell every day."[3] There was "never a page that was

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[1]Ibid., p. 113.

[2]Mark Twain and Charles Dudley Warner, The Gilded Age, p. 34.

[3]Mark Twain, Life on the Mississippi, p. 77.

void of interest."[1] "There never was so wonderful a book written by man."[2] He goes on to say:

> In truth, the passenger who could not read this book saw nothing but all manner of pretty pictures in it, painted by the sun and shaded by the clouds, whereas to the trained eye these were not pictures at all, but the grimmest and most dead-earnest of reading-matter.[3]

Twain knew the river well. As he began to read it like a book, he says it began to lose much of its romance. However, one gets the idea that through this familiarity Twain gains something far more important; he learns to accept its faults and shortcomings. When he describes the effects of a sunset on the water, showing a solitary floating log, "a long, slanting mark" on the "sparkling" water, "tumbling rings," "graceful circles" and "radiating lines" and other beautiful descriptive words, he creates a different image in the next paragraph as he describes what each of these means. The sun means "wind tomorrow," the floating log means a rising river, the slanting mark is a treacherous reef and the lines and circles are warnings of troublesome places.[4] An image such as this is acute since the two are so different. By giving these opposites Twain displays his attitude toward the river. Although Twain holds the Mississippi in awe, he often shows evidence such as this that the

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[1] Ibid.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Ibid., p. 78.

[4] Ibid., pp. 79-80.

river is not perfect; underneath its smiling face may lurk danger. He displays this ambiguity by playing one against the other.

This familiarity changes, however, when Twain returns to the river after his long absence. When he witnesses a river storm which he had been through in his youth many times, he says it had "an old-fashioned energy which had long been unfamiliar to me."[1] Throughout the long, detailed passage, he describes "thrashing" branches and "swift waves of alternating green and white." There are "electric ecstasies," the "wind increased in fury and began to wrench off boughs and tree tops." He ends the passage with, ". . . the pilot house fell to rocking and straining and cracking, and surging, and I went down in the hold to see what time it was."[2] Twain seems to be enjoying the storm up to this point as he stands on deck, watching the colorful effects. However, when he ends the passage as he does, he displays his fear. Although Twain is trying to be humorous with this ridiculous excuse, it still shows a change in his attitude toward the river. By his going below, he shows his fear of river storms which he previously witnessed seemingly unafraid. It also shows that he has been away from the river a long time and age and inexperience have made him

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[1] Ibid., p. 406.

[2] Ibid., p. 407.

less adventuresome than he was as a youth. Thus, the fact that he is no longer familiar with the river's perils makes him afraid and the river becomes more treacherous and monstrous than it was before. The things which were only "little difficulties"[1] before have turned into gigantic troubles.

One can see evidence of this change in other ways too. Twain describes:

> . . . the shining river, winding here and there and yonder, its sweep interrupted at intervals by clusters of wooded islands threaded by silver channels; and you have glimpses of distant villages, asleep upon capes; and of stealthy rafts slipping along in the shade of the forest walls; and of white steamers vanishing around remote points.[2]

Now most of the vague, superfluous terms have disappeared. The river is no longer bearing "graceful curves and reflected images" but is "shining" and "winding here and there." Instead of "woody heights" and "soft distances" there are wooded islands. No longer is it a fanciful and ornamented steamboat but just a white steamer, evidence that the words are much more definite and the excess wordage is gone. The idea of "distant villages" being peaceful shows again his ambiguous feelings. Like the people on shore, it depends on his viewpoint. As he gazes at the villages from a distance, they look peaceful and calm. Yet when he gets

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[1] Ibid., p. 69.

[2] Ibid., p. 473.

into the village it becomes like Louisiana, Missouri, "a brisk railroad center."[1] All of the drowsy villages in the distance are shattered by the trains which go through the towns, rapidly and noisily. Since he hates the trains for what they have done to the steamboats, he wants no part of the activity they bring. It "comes tearing along . . . ripping the sacred solitude to rags and tatters with its devil's war-whoop and the roar and thunder of its rushing wheels."[2] The contrasting word sounds are again evident. For the railroad which he hates he uses harsh words such as "tearing," "ripping," "tatters," "war-whoop," "roar and thunder" while the nature around is "sacred solitude." This difference in wordage seems to give even more evidence that Twain's images change with his positive and negative feelings.

Again the visual image appears, but it is void of much of its flowery language. Instead of the "graceful circle," the "sweep of star-gemmed water," and "reflected images," the description is more literal. He talks of:

> . . . the steep verdant slope whose base is at the water's edge, and is topped by a lofty rampart of broken, turreted rocks, which are exquisitely rich and mellow in color--mainly dark browns and dull greens, but splashed with other tints.[3]

The sounds of the words have changed from "radiating,"

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[1] Ibid., p. 427. [2] Ibid., p. 474. [3] Ibid.

"graceful," and "beautiful" to "broken," "turreted," "dark," and "dull." Although he is still trying to convey the idea of beauty, the words are not as gilded as they are in the earlier part. When Huckleberry Finn describes the magnificence of the river color, he tells about a steamboat that would "belch a whole world of sparks . . . and they would rain down in the river and look awful pretty."[1] Much of the flowery language is gone and what remains is a "belch" of sparks. The image is more precise with the grandiose terms deleted. Instead of Fenimore Cooper terms, one sees Huck Finn's terms, realistic, harsh, yet colorful. This seems to reflect Twain's attitude. The river has become more real. With his return, he still finds the river beautiful, but he sees it in its perspective. Gone is the superfluous wordage that he once used and in its place are words which more realistically describe the scene. Instead of an impressionistic painting in a gallery, the picture is more of a photograph, still lovely but a more accurate account of the scene.

Auditory imagery changes too. Twain uses many words to describe the sounds that the boys in Tom Sawyer hear upon awakening on Jackson's Island. Also he describes many and varied noises during the excitement of the steamboat's

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[1]Mark Twain, The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, p. 119.

arrival in Hannibal and of the steamboat races. However, when Huck hears sounds, the excess wordage is left out. There is "not a sound, anywheres--perfectly still--just like the whole world was asleep."[1] Again Huck observes "how far a body can hear on the water such nights."[2] He hears people talking on the ferry landing and hears what they say, "every word of it."[3] After a few days on the raft Huck is wakened by a steamboat and observes:

> You'd see a raft sliding by, away off yonder, and maybe a galoot on it chopping, because they're most always doing it on a raft; you'd see the ax flash, and come down--you don't hear nothing; you see that ax go up again, and by the time it's above the man's head, then you hear the k'chunk!--it had took all that time to come over the water.[4]

Here Twain paints a realistic picture of the water. The fanciful words are gone and he is only concerned with the realism. In the early morning scene in Tom Sawyer "not a sound obtrudes upon great Nature's meditation."[5] Also, a catbird trills "out her imitations of her neighbors in a rapture of enjoyment."[6] In the earlier novel Twain seems to be using the language of Cooper, which he later criticizes severely. Here the Romantic is at work, weaving a spell

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[1] Ibid., p. 117.

[2] Ibid., p. 35.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Ibid., p. 118.

[5] Mark Twain, The Adventures of Tom Sawyer, p. 110.

[6] Ibid., p. 111.

over his readers. However, the fantasy and romance is forgotten when Huck sees the "galoot" chopping wood. Even the raft is not drifting by gracefully, but is only "sliding." Thus, after his return to the river, Twain described the river sounds more accurately. Probably he had forgotten the actual sounds after being away so long; therefore, when he describes them they are sentimentalized and out of proportion. He ignores the earthy "k'chunk" and thinks about the catbird's "rapture of enjoyment." But his return to the river reminds him of the actual sounds and he is able to describe them with more accurate, concise and meaningful words.

There are some olfactory and gustatory images in Huckleberry Finn, but they too are different from those in his early writings. Huck describes the breeze that "comes fanning you from over there, so cool and fresh, and sweet to smell, on account of the woods and flowers."[1] This pleasing sensation soon disappears, however, when he tells about the "dead fish laying around" because "they do get pretty rank."[2] In reading this description one sees the difference between it and the one in Tom Sawyer. There are no "rank fish" to spoil the odor of fresh fish frying in the earlier

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[1]Mark Twain, The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, pp. 117-118.

[2]Ibid., p. 118.

novel. Now Twain is reminded of the ugly side of nature. In order to portray a realistic picture, he must be accurate and describe it all.

Finally, however, Twain shows this change in the river in the words he uses to describe the Mississippi. Previously it has been called "majestic," "marvelous," "grand," and "solemn." But when Twain returned to the river, he found it to be less majestic and proud and more lonesome. Now he talks of the "monotony of the blank, watery solitude." With the "unchanging serenity, repose, tranquility, lethargy and vacancy," it is a "symbol of eternity."[1] Twain seems to feel sorry for it and identifies with it. In a way he has become a lonely man for he no longer responds in accord with the society around him. He seems to feel that the river reflects his feeling of complete change, that it reflects his own loneliness. Twain seems to put this feeling into words when he returns to his boyhood home, Hannibal. He relates how he has remembered the past and how it mingles with the present, confusing him and convincing him that a change has taken place. This change has left him in the past and he feels the loneliness of one left out:

> The picture of it [Hannibal] was still as clear and vivid to me as a photograph. I stepped ashore with the feeling of one who returns out of a dead-and-gone

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[1]Mark Twain, Life on the Mississippi, p. 225.

> generation. . . . I saw the new houses . . . but they did not affect the older picture in my mind, for through their solid bricks and mortar I saw the vanished houses, which had formerly stood there, with perfect distinctness.[1]

He continues to refuse to recognize the change. "I passed through the vacant streets, still seeing the town as it was, and not as it is."[2] But then he begins to realize that the old friends which he would see "would be old, and scarred with the campaigns of life, and marked with their griefs and defeats, and would give me no upliftings of spirit."[3] With this he seems to understand that he, too, is "scarred with the campaigns of life." He will never be young and full of excitement again.

So it was that even one of the great humorists of all time should become pessimistic and despondent. Many readers are apt to look at Twain and see only his humor and possibly his satire, but when one looks beneath the surface and examines closely the images that are there, one can find a growing pessimism which plagued Twain during his later years. An examination of his river imagery especially shows this change. The river had become such a part of him that it reflects the feelings that he had and shows his growing pessimism. One sees the change through the image of the steamboat as it is described with fanciful and magnificent

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[1] Ibid., p. 428. [2] Ibid. [3] Ibid., p. 429.

words in the earlier writings, but, after his return to the river, becomes an ordinary boat, is reduced to having the same qualities as a raft and finally is a monster to be feared. The image of the pilot and other river personnel reveals this change too since first the pilot is a respected monarch with regal qualities, but changes to a tyrant to be hated. Finally, the image of the river itself reveals the change in Twain because the descriptive terms used in the early writings are grandiose, vague and flowery while the later writings use words much more definite, concise, and at times harsh. Thus, the river imagery shows a change in Mark Twain. Finally, it became so ingrained in his mind and his writing that it becomes a symbol.

CHAPTER IV

SYMBOLISM OF THE RIVER

One of the most humorous and most talked about passages that Mark Twain ever wrote is his introduction to Huckleberry Finn which says:

> Persons attempting to find a motive in this narrative will be prosecuted; persons attempting to find a moral in it will be banished; persons attempting to find a plot in it will be shot.[1]

In other words, anyone attempting to read more into the work than the author intended would be committing a grave crime. Yet for years critics have attempted to do just what Twain has asked them not to do. After years of study, scholars have decided that Twain means to say more in Huckleberry Finn than he implies by his witty introduction. Scholars, critics and other interested people have probed into his writing until they may have read more into his words than he intended. It is known, however, that a writer sometimes uses symbols unconsciously, especially when he uses the archetypal pattern of the journey and the archetypal symbol of water as Twain does. Then, too, since Twain is a humorist, possibly his "warning" is only to be taken humorously. Nevertheless, anyone attempting to deal with symbolism in

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[1]Mark Twain, The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, p. xix.

Twain must tread lightly. Regardless of Twain's warning, this discussion will still proceed as promised in Chapter I. Twain's use of the river as a structural element and as an image have been discussed. His use of the river as a symbol is not so obvious. Therefore, in order to do justice to him, one must examine the nature of this symbolism and establish the kind of symbol that Twain has used.

In Chapter I a symbol is defined as something that goes beyond the place of the image and refers to something which suggests a meaning beyond itself. This, of course, can be done consciously or unconsciously by the author. Some authors plan their symbols in order to establish a pattern for their reader. For example, in O'Neill's play, "Desire Under the Elms," the elms stand out as a symbol of the puritan mother who watches over the action of the entire household. This is not the way with Twain. He is not a conscious symbolist and if he could speak to us by means of a "letter to earth," he would probably be annoyed with those who even try to find symbols in his work.

Although he is not a conscious symbolist, Twain's use of the Mississippi becomes a particular kind of symbol in his works. It is not a symbol of one certain idea, but it becomes a symbol of various ideas in different works. By conveying a certain meaning to the characters, it indirectly becomes a symbol to Twain also since he is talking through

the characters of Huck and Tom and is the narrator in Life on the Mississippi.

As one becomes acquainted with Twain's works, however, these different ideas seem to form a definite pattern. They are not just tossed at random into his books, but seem to display in vivid terms his philosophy of life. By using the river as a symbol, Twain conveys this philosophy, making it a personal symbol to him. It becomes a symbol of the change which comes over him, a change separating his youth and his adulthood. Eventually it even symbolizes the complete despair which enveloped him after the death of his daughters and his wife.

In the early 1870's when The Adventures of Tom Sawyer was written, life was still gay and full of adventure for Twain. Thus, the river reflects this feeling. In this book the Mississippi is not as involved as it is in other works; it does not symbolize freedom, environmental determinism, inevitable change or a dreaded threat. Instead it is a symbol of contentment and pleasure to the young boys who use it daily to enhance a boyhood dream. To Tom, Huck and their friends the river offers many hours of enjoyment where they can find the peace and contentment for which every young boy searches. They, like many boys this age, are seeking harmony with the world and find themselves "out of tune" with the adult world. Needing a refuge, they often turn

toward the river.

Many instances show the river filling the boys' needs. In the beginning of the book Tom is reprimanded by Aunt Polly for spilling the sugar, a wrong which he did not commit. Since he has been unjustly accused, he feels sorry for himself and needs a comforter.

> He wandered far from the accustomed haunts of boys, and sought desolate places that were in harmony with his spirit. A log raft in the river invited him, and he seated himself on its outer edge, and contemplated the dreary vastness of the stream . . .[1]

The river seems to offer an understanding which he feels he does not get from the adults in his world, especially Aunt Polly. By using the word "dreary," Twain gives the idea that the Mississippi's mood is in keeping with Tom's; thus, it is able to comfort him completely since it shares his feeling.

When Tom is spurned by Becky, he again turns toward the river for solace. This time he is "gloomy and desperate." He is "forsaken" and "friendless" and no one loves him.[2] He meets Joe Harper and Huck and the three decide to turn their backs on the world and become pirates. Their choice for their rendevous is Jackson's Island, an uninhabited island in the Mississippi. When they arrive, for a

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[1]Mark Twain, The Adventures of Tom Sawyer, p. 24.

[2]Ibid., p. 101.

while, they find the contentment for which they are searching. The river and the island offer enjoyment of all kinds. They swim and fish in the river and hunt for things on the island. Like most small boys, they quickly lose interest in the island, but for a while it serves as a source of pleasure.

Since the river is familiar to Tom, it gives him a feeling of security. When he and Becky are lost in the cave, Tom finally finds a hole through which he can see daylight. As he pushes his head and shoulders through the hole, he sees "the broad Mississippi rolling by."[1] Immediately this is a point of recognition for him; this is where he belongs. Although the river is not as important in this book, it is there as a symbol of enjoyment to the boys.

Also in the early 1870's Twain wrote one of his finest books, Life on the Mississippi. As this paper has indicated above, this book is written in two sections, the first of which parallels Tom Sawyer with its adventure and charm. In this section, the river is generally a benevolent, secretive challenge to the youth. It is like an old man who knows the ways of life and will be glad to teach them to an eager novice. Romantic about its mysteries, it always holds another surprise just ahead for the young pilot. It symbol-

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[1]Mark Twain, Life on the Mississippi, p. 157.

izes romance, adventure and life at its pinnacle to Twain. In this section the river is powerful but it is a different kind of power from that depicted in Huckleberry Finn. When Twain tells about the treacheries of the river, they seem exciting and adventurous. The young pilot is challenged by the river's perils and he sets out to overcome them. He only seems involved with the danger as one who is watching an adventure movie; that is, he is excited along with those on the screen, but he does not feel the danger himself. When he is describing one of the river's perils, water flowing through the man-made ditches, he tells of the strong current and what it can do to a boat. When his boat is caught in one of these currents, "the boat careened so far over that one could hardly keep his feet."[1] Yet, he is not afraid of what might happen. It is adventure to him and he gives no indication of fear. He stands to watch and describes that it "was astonishing to observe how suddenly the boat would spin around and turn tail the moment she emerged from the eddy and the current struck her nose."[2] Here is a boy who is only "astonished" as all of this is going on, not realizing the consequences.

There are other ways in which the river symbolizes adventure to the young pilot. He devotes a chapter to the

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[1]Mark Twain, Life on the Mississippi, p. 157. [2]Ibid.

discussion of "sounding." This, he explains, is the testing of the water level to see if the boat can pass through a channel safely. He describes it as having

> . . . an air of adventure about it; often there is danger; it is so gaudy and man-of-war-like to sit up in the stern-sheets and steer a swift yawl; there is something fine about the exultant spring of the boat when an experienced old sailor crew throw their souls into the oars. . . .[1]

Racing the steamboats also adds to the adventure and excitement of the river. He devotes a chapter to this discussion and shows the great interest and excitement when he says, "Politics and the weather were dropped, and people talked only of the coming race."[2]

To Sam Clemens, the steamboats spell out a story of adventure into the unknown, the epitome of satisfaction. He first contemplates being a cabin boy "so that I could come out with a white apron on and shake a table cloth over the side, where all my old comrades could see me."[3] He later wishes to be a deck-hand, but "these were only day-dreams--they were too heavenly to be contemplated as real possibilities."[4] Thus, the river in the first section symbolizes romance and life at its fullest to the would-be pilot.

As the first section of twenty chapters closes, the river is already beginning to take on a different atmos-

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[1] Ibid., p. 100.

[2] Ibid., p. 146.

[3] Ibid., p. 35.

[4] Ibid.

phere. Finally the treacheries of the river are becoming more than mere excitement and adventure. Sam is becoming more than just a bystander as he is involved personally with the river's tragedies. The final chapter in the first section tells the tragedy of Twain's younger brother's death. He eventually dies after a steamboat explosion. One has the feeling that this is all new to Twain, that he is seeing a part of the river he has never witnessed before. The river is taking on a different meaning to Twain, a change which seems to end the youthful romance and adventure which he previously felt.

The second section of Life on the Mississippi describes a river that symbolizes something entirely different. Where the river is romance and adventure in the first part, it is not in the second. Gone is the excitement which the river yields to the young pilot. In its place is a river that has become more scientifically controlled, a change that is evident. The marks of this excitement are still present, making the story a sad one. It seems, then, that the river symbolizes to Twain the inevitable change that must eventually come to everything, a change which saddens the author. He is unable to believe this change at first since he remembers the river as being full of excitement. He first notices the absence of the river man in the billiard room. "If he was there, he had taken in his

sign."[1] The "pompous squanderings" of money have disappeared and the men in the billiard room are much more genteel. Twain misses the old days, for to him these "ostentatious displays" mean adventure. But, "a glory that once was had dissolved and vanished away in these twenty-one years."[2]

As Twain makes his journey down the river, the change becomes more apparent. The villages have grown to cities or have disappeared completely. Those that are still there have changed so much he hardly recognizes them. The biggest change to Twain shows his sadness:

> . . . the change of changes was on the "levee." This time, a departure from the rule. Half a dozen sound-asleep steamboats where I used to see a solid mile of wide-awake ones! This was melancholy, this was woeful . . . . Here was desolation indeed.[3]

He explains that steamboating only lasted about thirty years. "A strangely short life for so majestic a creature."[4]

As each change presents itself, the author feels compelled to talk about it. His comments show how surprised and overwhelmed he is with the idea of someone having the nerve to take the old-fashioned romance away from the river. When he realizes that the crew is wearing uniforms he exclaims, "Uniforms on the Mississippi! It beats all the

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[1] Ibid., p. 189.

[2] Ibid., p. 190.

[3] Ibid., p. 193.

[4] Ibid., p. 194.

other changes put together, for surprise."[1]

The structure of the river itself has been altered considerably and Twain is eager to comment on these changes. It has altered its course in places, created new channels and left others dry. The Mississippi has completely demolished Napoleon, Arkansas, but has given life and activity to Greenville, Mississippi.

Twain observes and comments on all of these changes. He seems to be in a state of disbelief that something that he knew so well could have changed so much. Thus, the river symbolizes to the older man, Mark Twain, something the young pilot does not even think of. It symbolizes the inevitability of change. Even something as constant and seemingly stable as the river must undergo this change. Man must learn to accept this fact and proceed from there, looking back only to appreciate his memories as things past and not to recreate that which will never come again. Twain, too, must face this inevitability although he seems reluctant at first. Like every human being he thinks that only his immediate surroundings are changing and his past environment is remaining constant, waiting for him to return. When he finds this is not true, he becomes melancholy. This inability to accept the inevitable change of the river could

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[1] Ibid., p. 211.

also be related to himself. When he is young, he views the river as something young, effervescent and alive. But when he is older, he views the river as more stagnant and having lost the thrill of youth. This is closely associated with his viewpoint of himself, for he, too, has lost this vitality and adventure which he once had. He, too, has been plagued by the inevitable change. Therefore, the river symbolizes two different ideas to two different characters; one who is witnessing the vitality of youth, the other who is living in the steady calmness of maturity.

As this discussion proceeds, one must bear in mind that Twain wrote the two sections of Life on the Mississippi at different times. Eight years elapsed between the writing of the first twenty-one chapters and the latter part, the former being written before his return to the river and the latter after his return. Much had happened to Twain during this time. He was traveling a great deal and meeting new experiences and varied kinds of people, a meeting which made him doubt the validity of the democracy the country was fighting for. The Civil War had been over for a long while, but the ideals which had been tested were still being tested all over the country. Suppression of the Negro, for example, was still going on, an institution that bothered Twain although he was born a southerner. Thus, the vein of his writing and eventually that about the river was changing.

Huckleberry Finn, which was published nine years after Tom Sawyer, greatly illustrates this point. Here the river is similar to the latter portion of Life on the Mississippi; it is much more involved and symbolizes deeper ideas to its characters. Probably one of the most obvious is the river as a symbol of freedom from overbearing immediate surroundings. Because of the river, Huck is able to escape from his father and Jim is able to escape Miss Watson. Both Huck and Jim are stifled by society. Huck has always been relatively free, at least much more so than the other boys his age. He has not been made to go to school or wear shoes, two of society's demands that make most boys rebellious. When he goes to live with the Widow Douglas, however, he is made to do these things and rebels against them. However, life with his Pap is no better because he is in constant danger. Therefore, he frees himself from society and his Pap and floats down the river.

Likewise Jim is running from society. Where Huck has only felt himself a slave, Jim is actually one and he too wishes to escape. He lives in constant fear of being sold down the river where he would never have a chance of obtaining freedom. His only chance of escape is the river; it alone offers the freedom which he seeks by transporting him to Cairo, Illinois, where he can get a boat up the Ohio River to the free state of Ohio.

Each time the two have an experience on the shore, they are even more convinced that they can not live by society's demands. They choose the river as a means of escape and thus it becomes a symbol of freedom again. After the two have temporarily been able to evade the Duke and Dauphin, their first thoughts are of the river. Huck expresses it, "So, in two seconds, away we went, a sliding down the river, and it did seem so good to be free again and all by ourselves on the big river, and nobody to bother us."[1]

Not only is the river a symbol of freedom to Huck and Jim but simultaneously it is a symbol of security. Although they encounter the dangers of steamboats and fog, these are only temporary dangers. They still are secure from the threat of society which they are leaving. They are out on the raft, virtually alone, and here they can find the peace and contentment they are seeking. In fact, as Huck says, "Sometimes we'd have that whole river all to ourselves for the longest time . . . It's lovely to live on a raft."[2] Through these words, one is able to see the complete dependence the two have on the river. It supplies them with the feeling that a home does to most people. A home furnishes

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[1]Mark Twain, The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, p. 205.

[2]Ibid., p. 119.

a sense of belonging and security and freedom from the demands of society. At home a man can be himself; on the raft Huck and Jim can be at home. Edgar Branch suggested that the river "breathes freedom and peace" and the raft is a "floating island of security."[1] When Huck returns to the river, he is safe and has time to plan his next move.

Huck is aware of this function of the Mississippi. He does not return to it unconsciously each time he has had some bad moments on shore. Instead he seeks it out, fully aware that (to him) it symbolizes peace and security. When he returns each time to the raft, he expresses his feelings. His language almost becomes a prayer of thanks. After the Grangerford-Shepherdson feud, Huck stays only long enough to drink in the horror of the situation. Here again is an experience on shore from which he must escape. So the first thought he expresses to Jim is "don't you lose no time, Jim, but just shove off for the big water as fast as ever you can."[2] And then he adds his thanks:

> I never felt easy till the raft was two mile below there and out in the middle of the Mississippi. Then we hung up our signal lantern, and judged that we was free and safe once more. . . . You feel mighty free and easy and comfortable on a raft.[3]

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[1]Branch, op. cit., p. 203.

[2]Mark Twain, The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, p. 116.

[3]Ibid.

Thus, he knows what is in store for him when he returns to the river. He can always depend on its offering freedom and security.

The river is also a symbol of power. This idea has been a topic of discussion for some time because some critics feel more strongly about the river's power than do others. All critics do agree that the river is a powerful force that plays with the lives of Huck and Jim. It is capable of altering their course at any moment, thus changing their experiences and eventually their lives. When the two become lost in the fog, they are very much aware of the river's power. The tricks that the fog plays by distorting sounds fools them for awhile until Huck is able to find his way to the raft. Also the river rises and falls at will and in doing so it sends dangerous debris into the path of the raft. At all times the two realize they must be careful because even though the river offers them water to drink and to swim in, they know it can be dangerous. They are watching constantly for anything hidden beneath the surface. The steamboats are not safe either because they can run over the small raft very easily. Since the steamboat pilots are not looking for them, Huck must look out for the steamboats. The river shows its power in other ways, too. Huck realizes that it is capable of tearing down the land in one area and building it up in another. It is such a powerful force that

it affects the lives of people on and around it. Because Huck and Jim have passed their destination, it also is changing their lives. Having passed Cairo they realize they are in slave-holding territory, where the river will constantly challenge them with new experiences. It makes Huck lie about Jim and it introduces them to danger by means of the Duke and Dauphin. They come close to death at various times, a proximity which convinces them even more of the river's power. However, they are always willing to accept what the river has done and proceed from there, since the danger with which they are threatened is only momentary, while the freedom which it offers is long-lasting. They really have very little choice but to obey its demands as long as they have chosen the raft as their means of escape.

Various critics treated this idea of power in different ways. Bennett discussed the fact that Huck and Jim are not the central figures of the story but the puppets of a central figure.

> That figure is the most insistent force on this continent--the Mississippi River. The humans of the tale are wisps and straws with which the river plays as it listeth.[1]

This, of course, showed that Mr. Bennett realized the

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[1]James O'Donnell Bennett, "Mark Twain's Adventures of Huckleberry Finn," Much Loved Books: Best Sellers of the Ages (New York: Liveright Publishing Corporation, 1927), p. 213.

river's power. It suggested that the river is capable of doing what it wishes to the physical lives of the characters. The idea of "physical" is important here because there are other critics who felt this power also controls the spiritual lives of the characters. Elliott suggested in his essay that the river is the "object of an awe that is more genuinely religious than anything else in the book."[1] He also said that:

> Huck will defy the Presbyterian God, but the river he fears and loves past any defiance; God is above and separate from him, but the river is about him and in him; God is righteousness but the river is mover and comforter and savior.[2]

Here the author suggested this sense of power even more but it becomes a psychological as well as physical power. He implied that it is much like a god in that it is "mover and comforter and savior," but he did not indicate that the river <u>is</u> a god.

Trilling and Eliot, however, in much contested essays said that they felt this idea of the river's power is so great that Twain has made the river a god. That is, it even controls the right and wrong in Huck's world. Trilling said that the river is essentially a benign god but sometimes

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[1]George P. Elliott, "Wonder for Huckleberry Finn: Twain, 1885," <u>Twelve Original Essays on Great American Novels</u>, Charles Shapiro, editor (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1958), p. 77.

[2]<u>Ibid</u>., p. 95.

becomes dangerous and deceptive by generating fog and contriving dangerous sand bars, snags and floods. He felt that Huck is a servant of the river god and he loves it to the point that his intense moral life comes from this love. Trilling said that Huck responds easily to the river and upon each return from shore he sings a "hymn of praise to the god's beauty, mystery and strength and to his [the river's] noble grandeur in contrast with the pettiness of men."[1] Eliot also believed the river to be a god. In fact, to him it not only became a god but God, indicating that it is the sole God to Huck. He felt that as an element of nature, the river is powerful and full of terror and that man is feeble and isolated. Because man is dependent on God, then God, or the river in this case, makes the life of man meaningful.[2]

Many critics, including Leo Marx, Richard P. Adams and Thomas Arthur Gullason, argued against the river being a god. They said that Trilling and Eliot did not offer enough proof that the river is actually a god. This writer

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[1]Lionel Trilling, "The Greatness of Huckleberry Finn," Mark Twain: Selected Criticism, Arthur L. Scott, editor (Dallas: Southern Methodist University Press, 1955), p. 274.

[2]T. S. Eliot, "An Introduction to Huckleberry Finn," The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, Sculley Bradley, Richmond Croom Beatty, and E. Hudson Long, editors (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, Inc., 1962), p. 324.

agrees with the latter idea. It is true that Twain has made the river a powerful force to Huck and Jim. As discussed before, the river shows this power in a variety of ways. Yet, it must be noted that the river does not completely control the lives of these two. While they are on the raft, it controls their physical lives, for they must go where the river takes them. They must go down-stream since an attempt to go upstream against the current would be futile. However, the two are able also to control their own situation by using their brains to outwit the river. For instance, the fog which the river creates is deceptive to Huck. It contrives noises where there is nothing and it cuts off his vision. Huck, however, is able to use his brain power and does not go where the noises seem to be. Eventually he finds his way back to the raft. At other times Huck outthinks the river as he propels the raft to safety during a sharp rise in the water level.

Although the river is in control of their physical lives to some degree, it is not in control of their spiritual lives. As mentioned in previous chapters, the river makes many things possible for Huck, yet the choice is still up to Huck and his conscience. The river makes possible the relationship between the white boy and the black slave; yet, it is Huck's own decision to tear up the letter and not give away the slave's secret. The river is influential in the

decision but it is not the controlling factor. Huck must decide for himself. Also, the river makes possible the various experiences which the two have, but they are not compelled to go to shore and meet these situations. They can stay on the raft if they wish. When they are off the raft, the river is no longer a controlling force of any kind. Huck is still able to make moral decisions such as his decision to regain the money stolen by the Duke and Dauphin. His ability to do this away from the river makes one think he could do it on the raft just as well without the river being the powerful force behind the decision. Therefore, the river does not seem to be a god to Huck. He praises it as he would a respected friend, but it is not a god which he worships. Instead, it is a symbol of power to him, a power upon which he can depend when it is necessary.

Before leaving this discussion of the river symbolism in Huckleberry Finn, one must look at another idea that has been discussed by various critics. This idea is that the river symbolizes environmental determinism, the idea that one's total personality is determined by his environment. Huck is able to think of the river directly as a symbol of power and freedom, but not as a symbol of environmental determinism. However, he can sense this idea because of the pressures of the various societies that he encounters. This is, then, a use of the river that Huck does not consciously

realize, yet it is an important aspect in determining his life. De Voto said that this

> . . . passage down the flooded river, through pageantry and spectacle, amidst an infinite variety of life, [has] something of surprise or gratification surely to be met with each new incident . . . it is the heritage of a nation not unjustly symbolized by the river's flow . . . By day or darkness the current is unceasing; its rhythm at the obscure margin, speaks affirmatively. For life is movement--a down river voyage amidst strangeness.[1]

The river flows through a cross section of the country, thus touching upon a wide representation of the nation's people. By its doing so one sees how it becomes "the heritage of a nation not unjustly symbolized by the river's flow." But it does not stop here as a symbol. By being a symbol of the nation which Huck travels through, it becomes a symbol of Huck's environment. Huck is being made to grow up as he faces various situations. He begins to lose his innocence as he witnesses the murder, fraud and deceit which is found in society.

> In the huge brown stream Twain has found an appropriate representation for his growing sense . . . of an environment that surrounds, threatens and ultimately stifles the freedom of boyhood.[2]

In every situation Huck must give in to the will of society or return to his mode of escape. In other words he is

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[1]De Voto, op. cit., p. 320.

[2]Albert E. Stone, Jr., The Innocent Eye (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1961), p. 144.

plagued by his environment and must obey its will. Never is he allowed to be just a boy with only his own will as his guide, for he must cater to a society that thinks differently. Thus, the river becomes "a moving representation of a universe so constructed that Huck's quest for freedom cannot succeed."[1]

Even though the river has a deeper and broader significance in Huckleberry Finn and the latter half of Life on the Mississippi than it does in the first half of this book, it is still a river with many elements of pleasure and gaiety in it. However, the Mississippi takes on another meaning in Pudd'nhead Wilson, which was written in 1894. Here one does not see the personable, benevolent or adventuresome river. Instead it becomes a threat to the Negroes who live along its banks. The river, to the Negro, does not offer pleasure excursions, but it transports him to the South where he is treated severely as a slave. Therefore, it symbolizes a dreaded threat in Pudd'nhead Wilson. The white people use it as a threat to keep their servants in order; to the Negroes it is a threat which they know their masters will carry out if they do not obey.

This threat of the Mississippi hovers over the entire book. At the beginning when Mr. Driscoll discovers there

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[1] Ibid., p. 143.

has been a robbery, he threatens to sell all four black suspects down the river. "It was equivalent to condemning them to hell."[1] To show the importance of this threat, all of the servants confess to keep themselves from being sold. When Roxy realizes she has made her real son Tom too strong, she also knows that, if she tells him of his true identity, he might sell her down the river to keep himself from being exposed. She also threatens him when he becomes belligerent by telling him that, since he is a Negro, he, too, can be sold down the river at any moment. The plan between Roxy and Tom for him to sell her as a slave in order to get the money they need backfires when Tom sells Roxy to someone in the South. When she realizes what has happened she exclaims, "Oh, de good Lord God have mercy on po' sinful me--I's sole down de river!"[2] This illustrates the great dread which this brings to the slaves as well as the complete despair that Roxy feels. Even the ironic ending reveals this dreaded threat, for Tom is exposed as a Negro and sold by his creditors "down the river." Thus, this threat of complete despair that the river symbolizes is found throughout the book.

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[1]Mark Twain, Pudd'nhead Wilson and Those Extraordinary Twins, p. 16.

[2]Ibid., p. 146.

When it is not used as a direct threat, the river in Pudd'nhead Wilson still carries with it a sense of gloom and darkness. One of Roxy's first thoughts is to commit suicide. She chooses the river to end her life, another instance in which the river is connected with unhappiness. What a difference there is in the serious tone of Roxy's attempted suicide and the lighthearted tone of Tom's similar inclination in The Adventures of Tom Sawyer. Also the river is associated with the total distaste which Tom has for the servant Chambers, since Chambers saves the young master from drowning in front of Tom's friends. He pours insults on the young servant because he wants to be under no obligation to a black boy. Because of his humiliation, he becomes even more hateful to Chambers.

Thus, the river in Pudd'nhead Wilson symbolizes a threat of despair and destruction to the characters. Its atmosphere is one of total gloom and foreboding. The reader receives only this picture of the Mississippi and is given no relief throughout the entire book.

Finally, after the death of his wife and daughter, Twain concluded his growing pessimism of religion, world conditions and human nature with "The Mysterious Stranger," in which the Mississippi becomes a river in Austria. In this work the river reflects his complete despair and disillusion. He chooses the river as a mode of death to

show that man's fate is determined for him after his first act. This first act touches off a chain reaction which, once started, can not be stopped. The mysterious stranger or Satan proves this by predicting a boy's death, a prediction based on the boy's rising a few minutes later than usual thus setting off a chain reaction of events leading to his death. By trying to save a little girl from drowning, he, too, drowns in the river. In this way Twain uses the river to show his basic pessimism which he acquired in later years.

Thus, the river symbolism changes in Twain's works. It assumes and presents a different idea to various characters in each work, therefore not becoming a symbol with a constant meaning. It must be remembered, however, that Twain is still speaking indirectly. To him the river meant all of these things. He learned to depend on it in times of need, he sought it out as a place of enjoyment and he watched it change as the years went by. Also it brought to his attention the issues of the day. He, like Huck, was bothered by the society which stifled the dreams of boyhood. His becoming a pilot and leaving the society on shore is evidence of his turning to the river for freedom from a life which squelched his dreams. He went from place to place, trying his luck as a writer but was not happy or successful. By leaving all this behind and becoming a pilot, he was able

to find the happiness he had longed for.

The Mississippi also brought to Twain the racial issue. Since he lived on the river during his boyhood, he observed a great deal of the Negro's plight. He hated the abuse of the human body which he saw. Negroes were maimed or killed in waterfront brawls and chained like animals for transfer to richer slave markets to the south. The attitude toward the Negro was baffling to young Sam for he was taught in church to love all of God's children, yet even the Church condoned slavery. The slave was taught to know his place and do as he was commanded. This dominance of the white man bothered Twain all his life. It was difficult for him to understand this abuse of the Negro and the river was always there to remind him of it. As a boy in Hannibal he heard many slave owners threaten to sell their slaves "down the river." He knew this was a dreaded threat and knew this to be one of the few threats that kept the slaves in order.

These thoughts are not just random thoughts, however. The introduction to this chapter hints at a pattern that is formed by Twain's use of the river as a symbol. During the first years of Twain's career as a writer, during which he was also newly married, life was good to him. In his writing he played with the ideas of human frailties, but most of it was in fun. He seemed to delight in poking fun at man's peculiarities. Therefore, his writing during this

time, Tom Sawyer and the first half of Life on the Mississippi, reflect this delight. Since the river plays a big part in these works, it becomes a symbol of Twain's early philosophy--life is a happy adventure. As time went on, however, Twain begins to see the sordid side of human nature. He no longer ignores the evil as he did as a young pilot, but begins to form definite, pessimistic attitudes toward life in general. At this time he wrote Huckleberry Finn and the latter half of Life on the Mississippi. As this chapter has presented, the river in these two works seems to symbolize his deeper thinking. Life has become more complicated than a boyhood adventure. Finally, however, he not only becomes aware of man's idiosyncracies, but with man's basic faults as well. At this time he wrote such books as Pudd'nhead Wilson where the river becomes purely utilitarian and a threat to the life of the Negro. Finally, he views man's complete ineptness and gives him no promise or ability to do anything for himself. This becomes "The Mysterious Stranger" and the river reflects this feeling. Although he is not a conscious symbolist, one might suppose that he unconsciously uses the river as a symbol since it reflects his basic attitudes. It does not seem, then, that one is reading too much into his work to say that Twain does use the river as a symbol as well as a structural device and an image.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

This study of the influence of the Mississippi River on the early life of Mark Twain and how this influence has revealed itself in Twain's language has consisted of discussions of Twain's use of the river in his writing as a structural element, as an image and as a symbol. Primarily, the discussion was based on Twain's Life on the Mississippi and The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, but reference was made to various other writings such as The Adventures of Tom Sawyer and Pudd'nhead Wilson.

Examination of Twain's writings which are not concerned with the river reveals that the river became such a part of his life that it pervades everything he has written. One finds various allusions to the river and to the language Twain learned as a steamboat pilot in such works as his love letters to Livy, notes and letters to other acquaintances, the travel books and his humorous sketches. Finding these allusions in seemingly unrelated works, this writer turned to Twain's famous river books to endeavor to establish the complexity of this influence.

This study shows that Twain uses the river on three different levels. On the first level, the use is structural. The river, as all Twain readers know, plays an

important structural part in Huckleberry Finn. It provides a variety of experiences for Huck and Jim by transporting them from one place to another, joining these episodes together to form the basic structure of the book. It also moves them from one set of people to another, introducing them to a cross section of the country's inhabitants. The river offers both Huck and Jim a means of escape from a society which stifles their freedom and in so doing establishes a pattern of the journey for Huck. The unusual friendship between the young Southern white boy and the Negro slave is made structurally possible by means of the river. The very fact that they are put there as victims of circumstance means that they must have some interaction. What develops becomes a symbolic problem.

Twain creates a few problems in using the river as a structural device. He seems to bring Huck back to his original family, thus creating a seemingly circular pattern out of the basic linear pattern he begins with. However, as previously discussed, he seems to resolve his problem by having Huck plan to "light out for the territory" at the end of the book, suggesting that the pattern will continue as a linear one.

Life on the Mississippi is structurally dependent on river. The first twenty-one chapters show the young pilot with an eager spirit, ready to meet the river's challenges.

The river that Twain presents is one full of mysteries and the adventure of steamboating in its prosperous days. The latter half, however, shows the loss of this adventure. The river is without glamour to Twain since it now has several safety measures and other scientific devices which have taken the mystery out of steamboating.

The river functions on a second level as an image. This imagery, as it pervades his writing, indicates a major change in Twain's basic philosophy. It is well known to critics that Twain's return to the Mississippi in 1881 shows a major change in his philosophy of life. Before his return to the river, his writing reveals a basically happy outlook. The sarcasm which is found in all his writing consists of a gentle poking fun at people and ideas. During this time he wrote The Gilded Age, Tom Sawyer and the first half of Life on the Mississippi. All of these reveal river imagery that reflect this optimistic philosophy. The language is generally more figurative and he uses grandiose terms to describe the river. However, when Twain returns to the river twenty-one years later, his writing is different. Now Twain has become disillusioned and pessimistic about life. Again the river imagery reveals this change. This time his imagery becomes more concrete, omitting the flowery terms that he once used.

There are three basic areas of river imagery that

reveal this change. The first is his use of the steamboat. This study revealed that the steamboat in his earlier writings is a fanciful place, an object of a boyhood dream. Twain sees it as a seclusion from the outside work, a place of peace and contentment. However, in his later writings, that is, the latter section of Life on the Mississippi and Huckleberry Finn, the steamboat is reduced to an object that is no longer viewed in such grand terms. The excitement is gone from the language about the steamboat. It is no longer a place of security; Huck's raft has taken over this position, a change which shows that Twain no longer sees the fanciful side of life.

The second area is the people. In earlier writings Twain reveals the pilot as a revered character to whom he can look for hope. Again he uses terms of grandeur to describe the pilot and other river personnel. When he returns after his long absence, the pilot is reduced to human and even sub-human stature. The imagery has become more biting and he decries the fact that the humdrum society on shore has invaded the life on the steamboat.

Finally, the imagery of the river and its surroundings reveals this change of attitude. First he uses the flowery language to describe the river. He seems to view it as a picture which has been painted by an impressionistic painter. Everything is so gilded that it almost seems

unreal. The words that create these images are indefinite and exaggerated. But with his return, although he still sees the river's beauty, the images convey more reality, assuming the characteristics of a photograph. Since much of the river activity is gone, Twain describes the river as lonely. He even seems to identify with this loneliness, finally realizing the complete change that has come to the river and to him. His return to Hannibal, his boyhood home, reveals this reluctance to accept change.

The last level of Twain's use of the river is that of the symbol. This discussion revealed that, although Twain was not a conscious symbolist, he seems to use the river as a symbol of various elements in different books. It was also found that the depth and involvement of these symbols correlate positively with Twain's life. When Tom Sawyer and the first half of Life on the Mississippi were written, his life was happy and prosperous. In these books the river seems to symbolize peace, contentment and adventure. It is a basically benevolent river which offers mystery and challenge to an eager young spirit. However, as Twain becomes more worldly and is introduced to the foibles of human nature, he becomes more pessimistic and writes the second half of Life on the Mississippi which shows the river as a symbol of inevitable change. He seems not only unwilling but unable to accept this change.

Huckleberry Finn also was published during this time. Here the river symbolizes a variety of things to Huck and thus to Twain. It symbolizes freedom from overbearing immediate surroundings and general security to Huck. He is able to free himself from the society that stifles him, at least for a while, and feels secure when he is with his friend Jim on the raft. The river is also a symbol of power, the importance and degree of which have become a source of disagreement between Twain critics. Some feel that this power is a god to Huck and Jim while others feel that it is a powerful force, yet less than a god. This paper asserts that the river is a great power but not a god since it does not have complete control of Huck's mental ability. The river also symbolizes environmental determinism, for once he is on the river he must go where the river takes him. Thus, it determines his surroundings.

After the death of his daughter and because of a growing pessimism with conditions of the world, Twain responded to this pessimistic feeling by writing Pudd'nhead Wilson in which the river becomes a threat to the Negro. This reflects his attitudes toward the South's spoliation and degradation of the Negro. Finally this pessimism turned to despair as he seemed to realize that the world would never change and he was no longer young enough to attempt to remedy it. Loss of illusions, old age and the death of his

wife led him to write "The Mysterious Stranger" in which the river symbolizes complete despair and disillusion.

Thus, this paper has revealed that the Mississippi River had a great and changing influence on Twain's writing. Probably no author has ever been so influenced by this river and so abundant in his allusions to it.

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